THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN JEWISH THEOLOGY:
MYTH, HISTORY AND CREATION

by

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DISSERTATION

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To my parents,
my first teachers

I will extol Thee, my God and King,
    and bless Thy name forever and ever. . . .
to make known to the sons of men Thy mighty acts,
    and the glorious splendor of Thy Kingdom.
Thy Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom,
    and Thy dominion endureth through all generations.

(Ps. 145:1, 12-13)

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INTRODUCTION

In presenting a study such as this one, "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind" (or at least for those of one's dissertation committee) requires a preliminary definition of the basic terms contained in the title. Since we propose to consider all of Jewish theology in terms of a dialectical movement between mythic and historical understandings of the central and omnipresent concept of the Kingdom of God, we will begin with brief analyses of these terms.

Myth and History

Hermann Gunkel held that "myths are stories of the gods, in contradistinction to the legends ["sagas" would be a more neutral translation of the German sagen] in which the actors are men."[1] If this simple definition is to stand, then there are, of course, no myths whatever to be found in the Bible or anywhere in Jewish theology. If myth, as Gunkel holds, tells of relationships and interactions between "gods," then monotheistic Hebrew thought is by definition non-mythological. And, in fact, Gunkel does go on to hold that the Biblical faith "could not tolerate genuine and unmodified myths."[2] However, Gunkel's definition seems to falter as he describes the monotheistic creation account of Genesis as a modified myth (a story about a god), but then contradicts himself by denying its status as a "real story" since it lacks dramatic

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[1] Hermann Gunkel, The Legends of Genesis (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), p. 14

[2] Gunkel, p. 15.

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development ("action and counter-action giving rise to a new situation or action"). For a Biblical story to be a story, men must "perform their part." But this, presumably, does not make such a story a myth since Gunkel claims that most of the Patriarchal narratives lack "mythical elements."[1] At this point, he seems to have fallen back on his initial definition, and with that we cannot be satisfied. What is the purpose of defining myth so narrowly that the category is banished entirely from the Biblical corpus? How can any story in which an essential character is an invisible God of creative and redemptive power be said to lack "mythical elements"? And if the active presence of such a God renders a story mythical, then major portions of the Biblical text must be so identified as must be the collective world view of the people who produced them. Before proceeding with our own argument, a pause to consider the more comprehensive formulation of Mircea Eliade might help to clarify the issues at stake.

For Eliade, myth expresses "a complex system of coherent affirmations about the ultimate reality of things."[2] This "archaic ontology" denies to external objects and human acts any autonomy or intrinsic worth; they all are seen as participating in a transcendent reality from which they derive meaning and finally, being itself. Human activity is repetitive, reproducing patterns established by heroes or gods in primordial time.[3] Earthly institutions are seen as modeled on celestial or primeval archetypes and human events as re-presentations of the suprahuman. Thus the earthly city reproduces the heavenly and the human conquest of a new land imitates the Creation and participates in its ongoing power as a new-birth.[1] The movement is from chaos to cosmos, the source of movement as of all reality is the sacred. In such an encompassing sacral order, time as a series of ongoing, once for all events is disallowed. All is imitation and repetition of the changeless, eternal round.[2] Historic personages are transformed into mythical models, their actions into archetypal patterns, based on laws originating in a transcendent source.

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[1] Gunkel, p. 16.

[2] Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 3.

[3] Eliade, p. 4.

This "archaic ontology" differs radically from the historical world view which it seeks to hold at bay. Where the former is repetitious, the latter affirms "a succession of events that are irreversible, unforeseeable, possessed of autonomous value."[3] This is true history.

Now, if it is the mythic world view that holds to this "archaic ontology," then it would seem that the earliest expression of Hebrew faith was indeed mythological, rather than historical. But as Gunkel might have said, the mythic mind-set of Mosaic religion was "modified" by historic elements which seem to have represented a wholly new contribution of Hebrew thought to the archaic religious scene. However, as we shall see below, a great many Biblical scholars have so overemphasized the emerging historic consciousness within Hebrew myth that the continuity of Mosaic thought with earlier mythic patterns has been largely unappreciated. In fact, there was no truly historical thought involved in the Hebrew re-working of myth, no events or human actions of "autonomous value," and although God was seen as revealing Himself in "a succession of events," those events were controlled entirely by Him and, what is almost always overlooked, those events pointed to a soon to be realized cessation of all progressive temporal elements. That is to say, God entered one static, non-historic situation (Israel in Egypt), and by means of a series of events completely controlled and directed by Him, led the people into a new reality (Israel in the Promised Land) every bit as mythic (i.e., non-historical) and static (i.e., non-progressive) as the one they had left.

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[1] Eliade, p. 11. [2] Eliade, p. 35. [3] Eliade, p. 95.

The liberation from Egypt is seen as a supernatural act as is the miracle at the sea and the revelation at Sinai. The defeat of the trans-Jordanian kingdoms, the crossing of the Jordan and the conquest of Canaan are, in like manner, threads in a great mythic tapestry which, once completed, in the age of the 'judges' loses all historical dynamism. This will be discussed in detail below. It will suffice to say at this point that we are dealing here with a myth--a myth so all encompassing that it co-opts human as well as natural events, denying autonomy to both spheres and locating the origin of all movement in a transcendent Divine Source.

Undeniably, the sense of progressive movement (if only temporary) which this myth contains represents a departure from the repetitive pattern of earlier mythology, but we are not yet dealing with history. That will come later in the period of the Israelite monarchy. At this early point we would even take exception to the scholarly habit of labelling these events as "sacred history" since that term can mislead us into forgetting that all these events were seen as temporary and pointing to their early cessation. It is the myth that is in control and, if it is a new variety of myth, it is because it encompasses everything, accounts for everything and in so doing, denies autonomy to everything--to both human and natural events--to Pharaoh and Moses, as well as to the Sea of Reeds and the Jordan River. Fifteen hundred years after these events, the "Gospel of Thomas" quoted Jesus speaking to his disciples: "If they ask you: 'What is the sign of your Father in you?', say to them: 'It is a movement and a rest!" (Thomas 90:4-7). "A movement and a rest"--such are the elements of the early Hebrew myth. The linear movement does not negate the rest from which it arises and to which it returns any more than the cyclical movement of pagan myth had denied its ultimately unchanging transcendent ground.

Thus, we are arguing for a larger understanding of myth than even Eliade has proposed. When one finds in the early Hebrew world-view so many specific elements of mythology--the Patriarchs as "race individuals"[1] representing in heroic fashion the archetypal ancestors; the "new birth" motif of the passage through and emergence from the tahom of the chaotic waters of the sea; the conquest of the Land of Promise as a "new creation"; and indeed the entire tale as the account of God's creation of a new people and His movement of them by miraculous action from the "chaos" of Egypt to the "cosmos" of His Law and Land--why should we search for a term other than myth--modified but no less mythic--with which to describe it?

This then is what we mean by myth: an account of reality which denies autonomy to men, events, nature; which sees as "real" only that which points beyond itself to a transcendent ground; which views all movement--natural or human, cyclical or linear--as movement out of and toward eternal rest. We must diagree with Eliade's view that in the Bible we find a world view in which "historical events have a value in themselves."[1] This was true of the histories of the Davidic and Solomonic courts which, as we shall see, represented a radical break with the earlier Hebrew mythic world-view. It was not true of the original Mosaic faith which denied precisely the autonomous view of events characteristic of the historical mind.[2] The hallmark of true history is not that events are seen in a linear pattern, but that these events are autonomous actions of autonomous men free of control from transcendent influences and open ended, that is, pointing toward an unknown and unpredictable future which, whatever else it may be, will be made up of more events of the same kind. No such view of events is present in the Hebrew experience prior to the tenth century B.C.E. When the historical mind does emerge at that time, the dominant category of the Kingdom of God undergoes a fundamental change. From that time on myth and history alternate in dialectical fashion as expressions of the Kingdom until the present day. It is precisely that dialectic that is the subject of this study.

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[1] Gunkel, p. 19.

In our discussion of myth and history above we have taken issue with the majority of Biblical scholars as to the dominant world-view of the Hebrews during the period from the Exodus to the advent of the monarchy. Put precisely, the question is not whether in this period the early Hebrews possessed a modern historical consciousness; no one would claim that they did. But many have claimed that their understanding of events can be described as "legendary" or "sacred-historical." To agree with this view would be to hold that the Mosaic God works in "history," that we have here an historical world view with mythic elements added throughout usually in the form of "interpretations" of events as the working of God in the world. Our point has been that this view turns the Mosaic faith inside out. In fact, the earliest Hebrew view of events was not one in which mythic elements were imbedded in history, but rather, an all encompassing mythic consciousness in which human and natural events became nothing more than objectified expressions of the will of the transcendent God.[1] Gunkel, et al., to the contrary notwithstanding, a myth which encompasses both Divine and human characters is (as long as the Divine has the last and controlling word) more, rather than less thoroughgoing and comprehensive than one which is simply "a story about the gods."[2] We feel that this expanded understanding of the term "mythology" is necessary if we are to comprehend the earliest Hebrew thought and not be misled by the so-called historical elements of which so many scholars have made so much. The ongoing utility of this definition of myth as the type of world-view we have described will, we hope, become evident in our discussions of later periods of Jewish history in which the mythic mentality prevailed.

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[1] Eliade, p. 104.

[2] Joseph Campbell seems to agree, especially as regards the Patriarchal traditions of the Amhictyony which, he states, "suggest mythology much more convincingly than chronicles of fact" (See Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God [New York: The Viking Press, 1964], p. 123.).

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[1] This denial of human autonomy runs through the early sources. Poor Pharaoh cannot even harden his own heart; God must do it for him (Ex. 14:8). Moses can, of course, do nothing of himself. To remind him of his lack of intrinsic power, God works through the miraculous "rod" rather than the human hand. In fact, what the Torah considers to be the sinfulness of the "stiff-necked" people is no more than their assertion of that human autonomy which the myth cannot allow.

[2] We cannot claim that John Bright agrees with our position, but he does dismiss Gunkel's view that myths can speak only of gods, not men. He states that "myths, for example, may contain a greater or lesser degree of historical content" (John Bright, "The School of Alt and Noth: A Critical Evaluation," in Old Testament Issues, ed. Samuel Sandmel [New York: Harper and Row, 1968], p. 172).

The Kingdom of God

We must now turn to the dominant theological category of Jewish religious thought, the Kingdom of God. That this idea has in every age provided the encompassing framework for all of Jewish theology will, we hope, be demonstrated below. At this point we need only state that this concept with its dual focus on present and future reality has served to define the essential elements of Jewish existence. To be a Jew is to live in the Kingdom, to stand before the King and to "know before whom you stand." It is significant that this motto is inscribed above the ark in so many synagogues. What can only be called a "royal theology" runs through the prayers of every Jewish religious service and is even expressed in the physical movements characteristic of traditional Jews during worship.[1] The Jew is the subject of a Monarch who rules according to Law--a Law identical with His Will which is ever just, never capricious. To live according to this Law is to live in the Kingdom here and now and yet to have the here and now dissolve into what Eckhart called "eternity's day," the day not in time, but which at once encompasses and negates time; the day to which the leader of the synagogue service has reference when, just before commencing the reading of the Torah scroll, he turns to the congregation and says: "You who cleave to the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day."

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[1] We have in mind not only the frequent bowing during prayer, but also the several backward steps taken at the conclusion of major elements of the service as if the worshipper were walking backwards as he withdraws from the presence of a monarch. This is precisely the explanation offered by the rabbis for these archaic gestures.

True life is lived through the Law, to keep the Law is to live with God, to live with God through the Law is to live in His Kingdom and in "the day that the Lord has made."[1]

This eternal presence of the Kingdom is but one of two essential expressions of the royal theology which is Judaism. The other is the eternal future of the Kingdom. "On that day the Lord shall be One and His name shall be One," says the concluding prayer of every Jewish service--on that day, not this one. Clearly we are speaking here of a future day, a day on which all will come to know before whom they stand. If to know this already is to be "alive" this day, then on that day all men will live in God's Kingdom of life when, as the prayer has it, "every knee shall bend" and all "accept the yoke of Thy Kingdom." The future referred to here is an eternal rather than a strictly temporal future; eternal because it speaks of the world's entering an eternal day in which Israel already lives. This is not a matter of re-shaping the present to accord with our distant vision of an ideal future but of working in time to make the future conform to the ideal present which is beyond time. The future Kingdom will thus be the universal acceptance of the rule of God already manifest in Israel through the King's Law.

Such a vision of the future is not historical, but profoundly mythical, as is the eternal present out of which the vision arises. But here, as elsewhere in Jewish theology, the historical element can be misleading. The Jew, as subject of the King, is given the task of witnessing to the world, of living in such a way that all men will come to recognize and finally enter the Kingdom of God. Such a witness involves action in the world of a spiritual-ethical nature, but these actions are themselves mythically determined in that they are seen as mitzvot--commandments originating in a mythical realm beyond the historical world. In fact, the entire purpose of the witness has been to call the world out of history and into mythic existence; to lift man from the horizontal, temporal plain of autonomous human action into a vertical, eternal relationship the essence of which is the affirmation that man must not act autonomously, but in accordance with the Law of the King whose subject he is. Thus the Jew acts in history, but not historically. His actions are not his own but are the commandments of the mythic Monarch; his purpose is not to reform history, but to end it by directing it toward its self-negating goal which is the universal reign of God. Here all historical development, all human progress ends; "that day" has become what "this day" always was, "eternity's day," and the world has at last become the Kingdom of God.

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[1] Although there is much in his work with which we disagree, the most exciting and original modern presentation of the timeless quality of Jewish existence was made by the brilliant and much neglected Franz Rosenzweig in The Star of Redemption (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

Considered in this way, Judaism has not been an historical faith at all, but a mythic world-view which seeks to abolish history by fulfilling it. This we believe to be the essence of Judaism as it exists today in its Orthodox form, as it existed in the ghettos of Europe, in the theology of the Pharisees, in the faith of the prophets and apocalyptic writers, and in the original Hebrew world-view of the period from Moses to the 'judges.' The thought of all these periods is obviously not identical; there are, of course, major distinctions to be drawn between the Mosaic faith and that of contemporary Orthodox Judaism. However, in all the periods just enumerated covering as they do a time span of more than three millennia, the Kingdom of God understood mythically was the dominant, encompassing idea informing the self-conception of the people of Israel.

As we have stated and as will emerge in detail in Chapter I, it is our position that the Kingdom of God was the dominant feature of Hebrew religious thought from the very dawn of Israelite existence. This view is opposed to that of the great majority of Biblical scholars who hold that the conception of God as King does not emerge in Israel until the establishment of the Israelite monarchy. These opinions seem to be based on two considerations.

First of all, it is claimed that there are no specific references to God as King (melek) in any pre-monarchical texts. However this argument loses something of its impact when it is discovered that many of the critics making it deny that there were any Hebrew texts whatever produced prior to the monarchy (1000 B.C.E.).[1]

We cannot argue the point here without writing another dissertation. We will only state our view, supported by a number of noted scholars,[2] that whatever the date of the composition of the texts in their final form (or forms), the material which makes up a considerable portion of the Torah is of a very early date and that among these compositions (written or oral) are the Song of Miriam (Ex. 15:1-18, 21) which contains the archaic chorus, "The Lord will reign for ever and ever" (vs. 18); the Blessing of Moses (Deut. 33) proclaiming that "the Lord became king in Jeshurun" (vs. 5); the Decalogue itself (Ex. 20) and the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 21-23) expressing a treaty relationship between God and His People similar to and probably based on contemporary (1400-1200 B.C.E) treaties between monarchs and their subjects found throughout the Middle East;[1] sections of the Book of Judges including Gideon's rejection of royal office, "I will not rule over you . . .; the Lord will rule over you" (Jud. 8:23); and, of course, the oft-mentioned Ark, probably a portable throne for Israel's mythic Warrior-King.[2]

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[1] We have in mind not only the original Wellhausen position, but the school of Alt and Noth in our own day. These latter two scholars affirm the "form critical" view that older traditions are imbedded in the later texts, but what they affirm in principle they deny in practice, making so little of these early elements that no coherent description of Mosaic faith is possible.

[2] Albright and his school come most readily to mind. His views on the antiquity of many received texts dating from the pre-monarchic period are outlined in William F. Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), pp. 249-72.

In the face of such evidence, the fact that the specific title "King" is seldom applied to God during this period proves little. The same can be said of the term "covenant" which is rarely used in early sources. Would one want to be led from this fact to the absurd conclusion that Mosaic theology was not covenantal? Both in regard to the covenant and the Kingdom, we can quote John Bright's apt phrase,

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[1] Harvey H. Guthrie, Jr., Israel's Sacred Songs (New York: Seabury Press, 1966), pp. 32-38. The author calls attention to Hittite suzerainty treaties of this period and points to the political, rather than cosmic model used in the Israelite myths to express the sovereignty of God over Israel, His vassel.

[2] Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 1:194-200. Eichrodt occupies the middle ground between the majority view that God was not known as King of Israel prior to the monarchy, and our position that this was His principal role from the beginnings of Israelite thought. Eichrodt supports the antiquity of the texts just cited (together with that of others which leave us unconvinced) and considers them evidence of the familiarity of Mosaic religion with the concept and title of God as King. However, he holds that the title did not come into favor until the period of the monarchy and that both Mosaic and, later, prophetic religion hesitated to use the royal designation due to its foreign associations. Here we must part with Eichrodt who fails to appreciate the necessity of a dominant royal theology to the covenant itself of which he, quite rightly, makes so much. His views as regards prophetic religion are puzzling and will, we trust, be refuted in our discussion of the prophets in Chapter I.

"the idea is larger than the word."[1]

The second consideration leading scholars to deny any Israelite notion of God as King prior to the establishment of the monarchy is the hypothesis that the myths of a people reflect their social and political institutions.[2] John Weir Perry speaks for many when he applies this view to ancient Israel:

> David took over, along with the citadel and sanctuary, its [the Jebusite] priesthood and sacral kingship . . . , the mythological nature of Yahweh developed accordingly. . . . The real divine king of Israel was Yahweh himself, who at the time of the people's urbanization and altered way of life, was transformed from a desert god into a "King of Kings . . ."[3]

We do not dispute the movement from politics to myth in Israelite thought; in fact, we will hold in Chapter I below that it was indeed the institution of sacral kingship that inspired the Israelites' conception of a purely mythic, invisible monarch. However, given the evidence cited above of a dominant royal theology during the periods of Moses and the Amphictyony, we must conclude that the movement from politics to myth took place long before the almost universally cited establishment of the Davidic monarchy. We do hypothesize that it was an earthly monarchy that was the model for Israelite theology, but it was the Egyptian, not the Israelite institution that provided the pattern. God was King in Israel long before David usurped His office. Perry completely misses the point when he states that in the crisis occasioning the establishment of the Israelite monarchy, the tribal elders turned over their power to the king.[1] Nonsense! What they were turning over was God's power which was the only power in pre-monarchic Israel. Samuel's strictures as well as the later polemic of the prophets were hardly in reaction to a king's assuming the powers of a group of elders. As representatives of the true and original King of Israel Samuel and the prophets were denouncing an earthly monarchy that had dared to usurp the ruling power which is God's alone.

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[1] John Bright, The Kingdom of God (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 27n. Although Bright never makes a case for it, he seems to be one of the only scholars to share our view. In his discussion of the Mosaic period he states flatly: "The notion of a people of God, called to live under the rule of God, begins just here, and with it the notion of the Kingdom of God" (p. 28). We could not have said it better.

[2] This view, which cannot be completely dismissed, seems to be a somewhat narrow political expression of Feuerbach's larger point that "The divine being is . . . the human nature purified, freed from the limits of the individual man, made objective" (Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity [New York: Harper and Row, 1957], p. 14). We do not disagree with this theory or even with its political expression (in certain cases). But as will be made clear in a few sentences (and in Chapter I), we do think it has been improperly applied by most Biblical scholars.

[3] John Weir Perry, Lord of the Four Quartets (New York: George Braziller, 1966), p. 98. As we have stated, this profoundly wrongheaded view is held by so many scholars that poor Perry can hardly be blamed for passing on what has become a general opinion. See also E. O. James, Myth and Ritual in the Ancient Near East (New York: Praeger, 1953), pp. 99-100 and Aubrey R. Johnson, Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1955), p. 34ff. and many others.

This brings us to the "Kingdom as history," which is a genuinely earthly-historical expression which has emerged in Israel from time to time, most notably in the period of the Davidic monarchy 1000-586 B.C.E., the century of Maccabean rule 165-63 B.C.E. and the modern Zionist movement. Here true history emerges characterized by purely political decision making, an open-ended view of progressive events, and most notably, an increasing emphasis on human autonomy. The old myth is often used during such periods to justify the possessor of earthly power, but in reality, history has co-opted myth and reduced it to a shadow of its former vigor. During such periods, the cry goes up for Israel to become "like the nations." And whether it is expressed by Solomon or Herzl the argument for increased historical consciousness always means the eclipse of the myth which gave Israel birth and which has always been the essence of traditional Judaism.

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[1] Perry, p. 97. Sadly, even the great Mowinckel seems equally misled on this point. See Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), vol. 1. On p. 52 he states with considerable insight: "The history of Israel may from one point of view be seen as a constant tension between the ancient ideas from the desert and the new Canaanite (general oriental) ones." This is true, as far as it goes; however, on p. 59, he holds that it is only at a much later period that we find "the kingship being regarded as contrary to Yahweh's sovereignty." It would appear that Mowinckel, like Perry, et al., fails to appreciate the true nature of the crisis accompanying the establishment of the monarchy or of the myth-history dialectic of the Kingdom that runs through all of Jewish theology.

We will trace this dialectical pattern of alternating periods of mythic and historical consciousness through the great ages of Jewish thought, culminating in the present in which man's situation has been so radically altered.

Today the traditional categories of Jewish--and human-- experience have shown themselves to be inoperative as bearers of the message of the Kingdom. Man, having moved beyond his mythic past, finds himself incapable of believing old myths or generating new ones. Myth has become mere mythology--a handsome museum piece, remnant of a vanished age, capable of evoking nostalgia in contemporary man, but powerless to give form and meaning to his life. And history, with all its promise of liberation from mythic stasis, has proved to be a deceiver, trapping man anew in a runaway historicism--an inexorable historical process in which man, once the director is now merely de trop. In mythology and historicism, myth and history have come to dead ends. New theological categories are desperately needed if the human is not to disappear

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with the old. Our study will conclude with suggestions of such new categories through which Israel and humanity may endure as people and image of God, creative witnesses to the Kingdom in which all men may come to know before Whom they stand.

Part One

THE KINGDOM IN MYTH AND HISTORY AS EXPRESSED IN PAST AGES OF JEWISH THOUGHT

CHAPTER I

THE EARLY BIBLICAL PERIOD

A. The Mythic Kingdom of God

1. From Moses to the Judges

> "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me."
>
> (Ex. 20:2-3)

Here in the opening words of the Sinai Covenant between God and Israel we find the essential conception of Divinity that was to characterize the theology of the Israelite people throughout the first two centuries of its existence. On the surface, the summons to exclusive loyalty to God seems strictly theological, but closer consideration reveals an underlying, unspoken conceptual substratum which is essential to an understanding of the expressed command. The language may be theological, but the conceptual model is political. Nowhere in the ancient world was there to be found a theological system demanding exclusive loyalty to one god. But everywhere in the world the Hebrews knew peoples were required to live in loyalty and submission to a single supreme authority. Such authority was wielded not in heaven by a single god, but on earth by one man or divinized man ruling his nation as absolute monarch. Would it be too far fetched to propose the hypothesis that in this political reality of the time, we may have the inspiration for the Israelite theology which emerged in the thirteenth century B.C.E.? What other model could the Hebrews have had available to them that would lead them to their unique concept of a unique God?[1] It would appear plausible that Israelite thought adopted the standard concept of kingship generally accepted at the time, severed it from its human connections--as in the idea of divine-human kingship known in Egypt--and emerged with the idea of a wholly Divine King who combined godly power over nature with kingly skill in battle.[2] Such a Divine King stood revealed in His mighty acts. And how much more impressive they were than those of human kings. Pharaohs might build treasure cities, but the Lord created the heavens and the earth. Emperors might mold nations; the Lord elected the eternal people. Kings might win battles by force of arms; the Lord delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak and redeemed His people by force of His will alone. In all these particulars God's power is conceived of as the ultimate royal power; He is King and Israel is His people, His Kingdom.

There can be little doubt that this mythic political concept of the Kingdom of God was brought into Canaan by the invading

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[1] In his famous essay, Moses and Monotheism, Sigmund Freud holds that Israelite monotheism was originally inspired by the cult of exclusive sun worship instituted by the Pharaoh. In addition to the many well-known objections to this fascinating but unproved theory, we would add our own. Such an origin could account for the monotheistic aspect of Israelite faith, but could not explain any of the unique qualities of the God of Israel. He was cast much more in the role of heavenly Pharaoh--father of a nation, lawgiver, military leader--than of the distant, remote life-source represented as the sun. If we seek the inspiration of Israelite theology, we might better look to the Egyptian kings themselves than to their gods.

[2] It is generally agreed that Israel's monotheism was, at this early stage, functional rather than logical. The existence of other gods was not explicitly denied, but they had no power over Israel. This would tend to confirm the political model of Israelite faith; having one's own king does not negate the existence of other monarchs, but renders them irrelevant to one's own life. On the subject of early Israelite monotheism, see John Bright, A History of Israel (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), pp. 139-40, and Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 26.

Israelite tribes at the very beginning of Israel's national life. But it has been argued that the tribal confederacy cannot properly bear the name of "nation" in the sense of a unified political entity. This observation is undeniably true and merely strengthens the case for seeing the Israelite conception of kingship as entirely mythological. It was because the political model had been so completely theologized that no political nation of Israel developed for two centuries following the entrance into Canaan. The Israelite of this period lived in a thoroughgoing, all-embracing mythic reality. No political organization was needed aside from that necessary to proclaim and implement the laws of the mythic Divine King. But this absence of political structures or administrative unity cannot be taken as evidence of an absence of national consciousness. On the contrary, it merely points to the exclusively religious nature of that consciousness and to its all-encompassing power in the lives of the people.

Unlike other nations, this people was not united by racial or--originally--territorial unity. It conceived of itself as born of a "mixed-multitude" in the trackless wilderness. It was common faith much more than common ancestry that gave unity to this primitive association of clans. God had united them through His covenant, had summoned a motley collection of slaves out of Pharaoh's kingdom and into His own, and now ruled them through His laws and protected them with His mighty acts. This nation had no need of earthly king or capital city or of any of the customary accouterments of monarchy. God's rule was direct and obviated the usual need for a human ruling class.

However, even in the Kingdom of God it is men who must perform the monarch's will. Despite the absence of government organization, this clan society was not wholly without leadership. Like all monarchs, Israel's Divine King ruled His people by His laws. The Bible gives evidence of the existence of elders who functioned as judges in adjudicating disputes in accordance with whatever laws the people had brought with them into the land or had developed once they arrived. The Book of the Covenant (Ex. 21-27) dating from this period, deals with a wide variety of everyday legal matters that would require local judges to decide. The seemingly secular nature of this code ought not to obscure the overall religious context in which it arose.[1] For the Amphyictyony the only law was God's law. Regardless of how mundane the particular point at issue might be, the standards in accordance with which the legal decision was arrived at were of Divine origin. In the sacral reality of God's Kingdom, there were no aspects of existence dismissed as profane. In such daily legal disputes the clan elders or judges had final jurisdiction. But in the popular mind, it was not these men but God himself who judged them as part of His direct rule of daily life.[2]

But if God's Kingdom must be ruled on an ongoing basis by His law, it must also be defended at moments of crisis by His strength. For this purpose 'judges' arose in the period of the Amphictyony whose function was completely divorced from that of the clan elders or judges of whom we have spoken.[1] These 'judges' were concerned not with legal disputes but with military leadership. They were tribal leaders of the charismatic type who appeared episodically to deliver Israel out of the hands of her enemies. These leaders were never conceived of as kings or secular authorities. They were ordinary men made strong--usually on a temporary basis--by God who acted directly through them to deliver his people from a threatening situation. As God's temporary agents they held no autonomous office, had no independence of action and could thus not ever be seen as a threat to the Divine monarchy.

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[1] The essentially religious nature of Amphictyonic law is not universally recognized. Kaufmann views the Book of the Covenant as a secular legal code, overlooking, or so it seems to me, the larger religious context in which it arose. Von Rad, on the other hand, cites the absence of any state function as custodian of law, as evidence of God's direct rule of His people by means of the judges. The latter opinion is to be preferred as being more in keeping with the mythic thought of the period. For their respective views on this subject, see Yehezhel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 256, and von Rad, pp. 31-33.

[2] Although he does not carry his argument far enough as to the exclusively mythic character of Amphictyonic thought, Noth does agree on this point. See Martin Noth, The History of Israel (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 165.

The tradition of the meek mortal designated by God and infused with His spirit to perform a special task goes back to Moses and Joshua "a man in whom is the spirit" (Num. 27:15-23). The charismatic leaders of the Israelite tribes stood in direct descent from these storied heroes and like them were God's instruments in asserting and defending His sovereignty.[2] There was no question here of hereditary office or political connection between these 'judges.' In fact, the episodic character of their appearance is crucial to understanding how they expressed Amphictyonic theology.

Even before God had revealed His Law to Israel at Sinai the people had come to know Him in His mighty acts. This unpredictable, shattering implosion of Divine Power into human existence was the primary experience of God fixed in the memory of the tribes. Before a king can promulgate laws, he must seize power; before Israel's Divine King could reveal His legal code He had to awaken the people to the power He already possessed, hence, the mighty acts. It is as if the legal code of Sinai was a gloss on the revelation itself which had no original content save its own power. It has been said that the content of revelation is revelation--the self-revelation of the power to reveal--the Divine power. This was surely so in the case of a people who remembered the judgment on Pharaoh, the miracle at the sea, the marvelous preservation in the wilderness. Even the revelation of the Law at Sinai was experienced in the midst of thunder and lightning from on high.

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[1] These tribal leaders will henceforth be termed 'judges' to indicate that despite this title, they were concerned with military rather than legal matters. They ought not to be confused with the lesser judges mentioned above who were properly so called. Although these two groups performed completely different functions, it is my view that they both acted as direct agents of the Divine will.

[2] Kaufmann, quite correctly, makes mention of the Moses-Joshua tradition in which the 'judges' stood (Kaufmann, p. 245).

So it was that this God of power continued to disclose Himself in the powerful personalities He called forth to deliver His subjects from their enemies. Like all royal courtiers, these 'judges' had in common nothing of their own; they were united only by the external will of the King that animated them and gave them victory. They were servants of the King with no personal pretensions to power. This is nowhere made clearer than in the story of Gideon, the 'judge' who delivered his tribe of Manasseh from the Midianite enemy (Jud. 6-8). Filled with the spirit of the Lord, he drove the foe from the land. At once, the people offered to make him king. He refused absolutely with words which can serve as an eloquent summation of the theology of the period: "I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you" (Jud. 8:23). The people made no response; they were familiar with what can only be called the "royal theology" he expressed. And if their zeal caused them to forget for a moment the Divine King who ruled Israel, they immediately returned to the self-image of Israel as the Kingdom of God that informed the whole period.[1]

This early Israelite conception of the Kingdom of God is, despite opinion to the contrary, thoroughly mythical.[2] A Kingdom without established earthly political, social or economic structures, could hardly be anything else. Such a sacral order was strictly religious--a vertical universe in which all eyes were fixed on God. His Kingship was the reality which encompassed Israel, the sole reality which held the clans together. And like all mythic realities, this Kingdom was historically static. Much has been said about the supposed demythologizing emphasis of Israel's historic faith but what may have been true of the brief period of liberation and wandering ceased to be the case once the native population of Canaan had been largely subdued.[3] Once the land of promise had been conquered, God revealed Himself as upholder of the status-quo.[4] As liberator of His people from Egyptian bondage, He had indeed shattered what was, and "made all things new." But now the time for dynamic action had passed. He had brought His people in. He had fulfilled His promises to the Patriarchs. He ruled His Kingdom day by day by means of His Law code expressed by His lesser agents the clan elders or tribal judges. In times of emergency He preserved His Kingdom by raising up greater agents, the 'judges' or charismatic leaders. One cannot deny the dynamic nature of their calling and subsequent military feats. However, it must be remembered that all their efforts were aimed, not at fresh conquest, but at regaining what had been lost or preserving what had been won previously. In this sense alone the later 'judges' were of quite another type than Moses and Joshua who fought to establish the new, not to preserve the old. Secure in the mythic Kingdom now established, the Amphictyony saw no need to trouble history further.

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[1] Before moving on, two points should be noted which would seem to support our case for a mythical rather than historical Israelite world view during the Amphictyonic period. (1) In addition to the lesser judges and the 'judges' (tribal chiefs) already mentioned, I Samuel 1-3 would seem to indicate the existence of a priestly caste attached to various sanctuaries. Their cultic role was unique but no more "religious" than the functions of the two other groups who also served the Lord. (2) We have not mentioned the wide-spread apostasy attributed to this period. The fact that this particular "sin" is noted throughout the Book of Judges should not surprise us. When the dominant world view is mythic, sin will be defined as straying from the accepted myth to another (from the 'true" god to a false rival). Since this period was totally without political consciousness, no political crimes were possible.

[2] Kaufmann disagrees; see chapter VII.

[3] For the strongest statement of this early eschatological outlook, see Kaufmann, p. 261.

[4] Bright makes much of the unique Israelite sense of history (see Bright, p. 136) in contrast to the non-historical world view of the pagans of the time. However, like the great majority of Biblical critics,

From its Mosaic beginnings, Israelite theology had proclaimed the authority of the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom, involving, as it did, the immediate relationship between earthly men and an invisible monarch transcending the limitations of time and space (while controlling both) was necessarily mythic in scope. If we keep this in mind, we will better understand the need for the original historical thrust of Israelite theology as well as the causes of the blunting of that historical drive once its mythic ends had been achieved.

The original theology developed by Moses was implicitly a royal theology based, we believe, upon a mythic concept of political

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he fails to note the eclipse of historical consciousness once the promised land had been occupied. One cannot help suspecting that this oversight on the part of so many is due to a lapse from objective scholarship into apologetics.

kingship. In the name of the mythic monarch of Israel, Moses demanded the liberation of his people from the clutches of the earthly-historical monarch of Egypt. "Let my people go, that they may serve me!" (Ex. 7:16). As might have been expected, Pharaoh failed to comprehend the nature of the power he was confronting. For him, as for all earthly-historical rulers of the time, myth and history were one. Pharaoh himself combined in his person both historical kingship and divinity (i.e., mythic rule). All mythic reality had its earthly counterpart and the line between the heavenly and the earthly, the divine and the human, the mythic and the historical had been effectively obscured. Now he found himself faced with an imageless, heavenly King lacking all the earthly manifestations of monarchy: no court, no government, no political power, nothing at all save a meek man of halting speech who claimed neither divinity nor authority. He was merely the instrument, the humble agent of the invisible ruler. Surely this totally invisible Divine Kingdom for which Moses spoke was the most thoroughgoing mythic reality that the ancient world had seen.

But this mythic Kingdom was also unique in that it was expressed in terms of a creative historical drive to establish a new reality on the earth, a nation unlike other nations in that its self-understanding would be completely mythical. The Kingdom of God for which Moses spoke had within it a dynamic power to uproot and shatter historical and natural realities. Both nature and history obeyed the God who was beyond them both. The visible was made to serve the invisible as, perhaps for the first time, a myth was used to disrupt rather than preserve the status quo. At the Red Sea both nature and history were humbled before this new power as the waters parted and the armies sank in the depths. The result was nothing short of a new creation, a new nation--not strictly speaking an historical nation, because its mandate and foundation were eternal and invisible--and not yet a purely mythic nation because its energies and efforts were directed outward into the historic environment. Its strength was that of change, of making new, of creating. Conquest was the method utilized to build the new creation in the new land. This creative energy which united the categories of myth and history and transcended them both brought Israel into its land and established them as fulfilment of the Divine Kingdom spoken of by all the fathers from Abraham to Moses.

But once established in the land, the creative energy, unique to the Israelite blending of myth and history, faded away. The historical dynamic receded into folk memory as soon as its object--the occupation of the land--was fulfilled. What was left was the myth--the unchanging Kingdom of the mythic Monarch was now established. Nowhere in the literature concerned with this period do we find a trace of historical thinking. The battles fought in the Book of Judges are episodic events necessitated by threats to the status quo; the charismatic leaders come and go as is required by the purely defensive needs of the community. One might assume that this lack of historic sense as revealed in the Book of Judges is due to the staccato manner in which uneventful, peaceful periods alternated with military crises or, perhaps to the lack of unity of the life of the loosely associated tribes. What seems more likely is an explanation based more on the inner mentality of the clans than on the external events of the period. It is true that the historical sitaution was the basis for that mentality, but in its self-fulfilment the historic drive to conquer the land had spent itself. With no place further to go on the earthly plain, the thinking of the Israelites turned inward and upward. For them history had ceased and had been replaced with the mythic reality which was seen as history's final fulfilment.

It was not until the emergence of the monarchy in Israel that the people can be said to have re-entered history--a process which involved the virtual dissolution of the tribal identities which had been the essence of the self-contained mythic kingdom of the two centuries between Joshua and Samuel.

2. Characteristics of Early Israelite Myth

We have held that the earliest expression of Israel's national self-consciousness was essentially mythical in form and monarchical in conception. We have gone further and suggested that the institution of absolute monarchy in the ancient Near East may well have provided the model for the Israelite conception of the invisible Divine King who created and ruled His mythic nation. That this rule was, in the case of Israel, initially direct--that is, without benefit of mediating human institutions--would seem to indicate that the myth in question was more thoroughgoing than those of other peoples with more complex social and political institutions. At this point we seem to be speaking of different degrees of myth. We should pause to explain our terminology.

As we use the term in this study, a myth is a story or account of reality which is essentially larger than life. In fact, the central purpose of myth is to elevate human existence by placing it in a cosmic context. Myth affirms the ultimate significance of the human environment in that it conceives of it as more than human; a world pregnant with high meaning which enfolds man as part of the significant whole. Since myths confront man with a representation of reality in terms of a center of power ultimately beyond his control but upon which his very life depends, the human response to myth is properly one of awe, wonder and humble submission. The more complete the mythic image of reality, the less room for human initiative. Myth exalts what is by conceiving of Being itself as holy. The ontologically real is sacred and, as such, must not be disturbed by change. Such change could come frome one of two sources: from man or from nature.

The disorder in nature must therefore be enfolded in the larger mythic order as periodic outbreaks of natural fury become part of the cosmic drama in which chaos is conquered and brought again and again under higher control. By inclusion into the mythic system as constitutive of the cyclical pattern of reality, nature loses its autonomy and is effectively subdued by myth. But man's life does not so easily fit into ready-made mythic models based on the cycles of nature. The mythic attempt to subdue man expresses itself in doctrines of Divinely-ordained kingship and socio-political systems. By obeying the king's law and playing one's assigned part in the social system, one shapes one's life to the sacred totality and gains the sense of participation in the whole. But, for the myth to succeed in so domesticating man, all ideas of human autonomy must be disallowed. More than this, any idea of historical progress must be suppressed as it might threaten the sanctity of the whole by encouraging man to conceive of change in a reality already pictured as perfect and complete. Myth then is characterized by a static and dependent view of institutions; a repetitive, non-progressive (i.e., anhistorical) view of events; and a heteronomous view of man.

In terms of these three criteria, Israelite myth represents a startlingly new departure from traditional mythic patterns. Nevertheless Israelite thought was strongly mythical. Even its tendency to de-mythologize various elements of earlier myths must be seen in terms of a larger mythic conception.[1]

For example, we have seen that there is a notable absence of institutional structure among the earliest Israelites. There is no static mythical view of institutions simply because there are no permanent institutions. But this does not mean that Israel had de-mythologized the functions of such institutions as they existed among other peoples. On the contrary, in Israelite thought the ruling function elsewhere expressed in the institution of kingship had become not de-mythologized, but totally mythical. In this sense Israelite thought was more, not less mythical than that of other peoples. The establisment of ongoing institutions run by men introduces a strong human element into the Divine order which might eventually develop into self-authenticating, autonomous structures. The fully mythic system would totally exclude human participation of a kind that could conceivably lead men to see themselves as acting on their own initiative or holding power as a matter of personal or familial right. Myth locates all initiative in the Divine realm. Non-Israelite myth had allowed for earthly institutions on condition that they received annual or periodic renewal of their divine mandates as in Mesopotamia and Egypt respectively. Tribal Israel, however, dispensed entirely with ongoing institutions and vested all power in God who ruled His people with a directness and immediacy unknown to other nations. The human representatives He chose were never given any manner of ongoing mandate. God had to be consulted on a continuing basis on every question. He bestowed His spirit and withdrew it as He pleased, on whom He pleased, when and where He pleased. Moses, Joshua and the 'judges' held no permanent offices. All ruling power was in God; human institutions could only be seen as rivaling the Divine rule.

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[1] It has become a commonplace of Biblical scholarship to point with wonder at the originality of Hebrew thought's "de-mythologizing" of nature and seasonal cycles. What the Bible actually does is to remove from nature all mythic autonomy only to re-locate it in the larger context of an all-embracing myth in which all time and space are manipulated by a Divine source beyond them both.

Gerhard von Rad, among others, has denied that Israel possessed any conception of God as King prior to the entrance into Canaan.[1] It was from the Canaanite cult of El with its conception of its god enthroned above his pantheon, that Israel assimilated its royal image of divinity. According to von Rad, this conception replaced an earlier one of a desert-warrior God of Sinai. We cannot agree with von Rad's thesis. It may be true that specific references to God as King are not available from the Mosaic period. But, then, little is. We do have the memory of later writers from which to attempt to determine what the Mosaic conception of God may have been. We can, therefore, hypothesize on the subject in terms of unspoken conceptions which would seem to underlie the earliest remembrances of the Mosaic and post-Mosaic periods.

As we have noted above, God, through Moses, demands that Pharaoh "let my people go, that they may serve me." The very situation unheard of in prior myth of a God confronting a king in a direct contest of strength and will would seem to assume the royal status of the God, which, due to its purely mythical nature is superior to that of the earthly king. And why must Israel leave Egypt to serve this God, if not because His Kingship stands in direct rivalry to the royal pretensions of Pharaoh. Israel cannot remain as servant of the Egyptian king precisely because he is the servant of the Divine King. Surely the claims being pressed by God in this story are greater than those of a mere warrior deity of the desert. The God of Israel is a warrior, but He is also a nation-builder, an absolute master, a lawgiver and liberator. In short, a King. If von Rad accepts the antiquity of the warrior god tradition, he has little excuse to side-step the royal conception of deity which seems to be assumed in the accounts of the exodus.

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[1] von Rad, p. 23.

And what of the primary symbol of God's presence during the Mosaic period? Is there any compelling cause to doubt the antiquity of the Ark tradition? If the Ark was not the throne of the invisible King of Israel, then what could its purpose have been? As Walther Eichrodt has observed, the particular appropriateness of the Ark as portable throne of God to a people moving through the desert leads us to accept it as a genuinely Mosaic cult object.[1] Add to this the strong probability that Numbers 10:35-36 ("And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, 'Arise, O Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered . . .'") recalls an original saying of Moses, and we have still another bit of evidence that the Israelite God was seen as enthroned Warrior-King from the earliest period.

All the evidence points to an even more highly developed royal conception of God following the entrance into Canaan. Of the Amphictyonic religion, we know less than we would like. Tribal traditions agree that the national consciousness centered around an Amphictyonic shrine at which the ancient Ark was kept.[1] The variety of holy places mentioned in traditions of the period would seem to indicate the very interesting probability that the shrine was moved a number of times. Majority opinion seems to opt for Shiloh as the Amphictyonic center (Josh. 18:1, Jud. 18:31, Sam. 1:3, etc.), but Gilgal is also mentioned frequently in Joshua and Samuel as is Bethel and Shechem.

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[1] Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 1:107-9.

It was at Schechem that the Amphictyony was originally formed in a ceremony (Josh. 24) that was to become the prototype of what was probably the major religious observance of the tribes: the ceremony of covenant renewal. The earliest Israelite legal document, the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 21-23) which dates from this period specifies three pilgrim festivals to be observed by the Israelite's "presenting himself before the Lord" doubtless at one of the shrines mentioned above. But we learn in Judges 21:19 and I Samuel 1:3, 21 of a great annual festival observed at Shiloh. And again in Deuteronomy 31:9-13 we are told of Moses' supposed instruction that all Israel assemble every seventh year at the feast of booths (autumn) to hear the Law read. Although the references in Samuel speak of cultic sacrifice as part of this pilgrimage, it would seem that the more authentically Israelite aspect of this festival was its emphasis on the legal covenant with God.[2]

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[1] Bright, p. 147.

[2] Remarkably Noth (p. 101) and Bright (p. 149) agree on this point. Deuteronomy 31:10 is convincing indeed if it has convinced these two old antagonists to see eye to eye.

The famous assembly of the tribes in Joshua 24 makes no mention of sacrifices. Joshua has called the people together before his death to recite the events of sacred history. "Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God" (Josh. 24:1). Joshua reviews the entire historical narrative from Abraham through the recently completed conquest and concludes, in the name of God: "I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you dwell therein; you eat the fruit of vineyards and oliveyards which you did not plant" (Josh. 24:13). This concludes the recital of the history. It would seem that all has been accomplished and that for Israel history has ceased. But more of that below.

The text continues with the people's pledge to serve the Lord exclusively and Joshua's proclamation of "statutes and ordinances for them at Schechem." This is the central act of the ceremony: the acceptance of the Law of God as binding on all Israelites. This concentration on Law rather than the usual cultic practices makes sense only in terms of a royal theology in which the mythic King communicates with His subjects primarily in terms of legal ordinances. The emphasis on this type of basically political model of Divine-human relationship is unique to Israel and provides the strongest evidence of the Amphictyonic faith in God as King. If more proof is needed, we have the text of the so-called "last words of Moses" which would certainly seem to refer to the annual ceremonies of covenant renewal:

> Thus the Lord became king in Jeshurun,
> when the heads of the people were gathered,
> all the tribes of Israel together.
> (Deut. 33:5)

One could hardly desire more explicit evidence that the periodic covenant renewal ceremony was simultaneously a ceremonial affirmation of the Kingship of God. In the face of such evidence one can only wonder at the insistence in some quarters that Israel somehow had a "demythologized" conception of God.[1] As we have indicated, the absence of self-perpetuating human institutions points, rather, to the all encompassing, total nature of Israel's mythical conception of her God-King.

We have held, further, that myth presents a static view of events which is the opposite of a progressive, historical conception. It has often been claimed that Israel was the first to conceive of history as the expression of the Divine activity and as such, broke with the cyclical, mythic models of surrounding peoples. This claim is both true and false. As we have said above, it cannot be denied that Israel's first expressions of faith revealed a new and exciting conception of a dynamic, historically active God. However, it must be remembered that all the sacred history, all the "mighty acts" of the Lord were aimed at establishing a permanent, static state of affairs which, in fact, was realized in the later theology of the Amphictyony. The humbling of Pharaoh's earthly kingdom by means of historical as well as natural occurrences was necessary so that God's people might be free to participate in His mythic Kingdom. It is the myth that is central, not the history. The latter is merely employed in the former's service. As soon as the conquest of Canaan was complete (or sufficiently so for the establishment of the mythic Kingdom), history, in the sense of ongoing growth and development ceased in Israel. Joshua's words at Shechem quoted above, put all the sacred history in the past. Israel has been brought in and now need only keep her King's laws. She possessed the cities He had given her and enjoyed the vineyards and fields He had won for her. All had been done so as to provide a place for the mythic Kingdom to flourish. History had served its purpose; now preservation, rather than expansion was called for. Further change could only be seen as a threat. All wars would henceforth be purely defensive; all leaders called "not to conquer, but to save."

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[1] Classic statements of this point of view can be found in William Foxwell Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1940) and G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment (Gateshead-on-Tyne, England: Northumberland Press, 1950).

It is surprising that the mythic nature of post-conquest Amphictyonic thought is so seldom recognized. But, regardless of the tendency of most scholars to see all pre-Davidic Israelite theology in terms of "sacred history," the evidence is on the other side and places Israel in this period very much in the universal tradition of all myth with its static view of events. In fact, it was not until the Davidic period that true history emerged from its earlier encompassing mythic context.

We have already covered the last of the three elements of myth we mentioned. In discussing the question of institutional structures in early Israel, we indicated that the absence of such institutions proved that all power and initiative was located directly in God. This is another way of saying that the Mosaic and the Amphictyonic religions, while differing on the issue of historic dynamism, agreed on the absoheteronomy of man. God ruled by conveying His wishes to man in two ways. He performed His mighty acts in order to establish and protect His mythic Kingdom, and He proclaimed His Law through which He ruled His Kingdom. The temporary representatives He chose--a prophet-teacher like Moses;

a soldier like Joshua; the lesser judges listed in Judges 10:1-5 and 12:7-15 whose function was judicial; and the greater 'judges' or charismatic leaders--were merely His agents, totally dependent on His immediate and constant inspiration. None of them passed his office on to a son because none of them really possessed an office. All authority came from God and could neither be grasped nor passed on by men. Israel as a nation, as well as its individual citizens, were collectively and individually subjects of and, more than that, creatures of the one mythological Creator-King on whom they were totally dependent.

All these elements--the remarkable absence of political institutions in Israel for 200 years; the post-conquest eclipse of the Mosaic historical theology by an ahistorical, static, realized eschatology; the rejection of all human autonomy and initiative in the shaping of events--combined with the Israelite conception of the absolute Divine Monarch to produce an all-embracing mythological conception of Israel as the Kingdom of God. These factors rendered the Israelite world view more--not less--mythical than those of the more "normalized" political nations roundabout. This was to remain the case for two centuries until new historical developments forced Israel to alter radically its mythic self-image. But even then proponents of the myth fought long and hard to prevent its replacement by the new politico-historical conception of the Kingdom.

B. The Kingdom as History

1. The Age of the Israelite Monarchy

The crucial shift from myth to history, from the invisible non-political Kingdom of God to the earthly-historical kingdom of the Israelite kings was a relatively rapid one, but not quite as instantaneous as some would have it.[1] It is a misleading oversimplification to locate the great change at the moment of the anointing of Saul by Samuel. Such thinking usually identifies Samuel as the last of the 'judges' and Saul as the first of the kings. But, in fact, this view obscures the charismatic character of Saul's leadership. Once this is recognized, Saul can be properly seen as both the last of the 'judges' and the first of the kings.[2]

As we have seen, a 'judge' was an inspired leader moved by the invasive force of God's will to defend His Kingdom from external attack. Saul was a classic example of such a figure. He had no family background to speak of, was of the smallest, most obscure tribe and exhibited no exceptional personal qualities until the spirit of God lighted upon him as it had on all the 'judges' before him. He is in every sense an inspired leader. Given to ecstatic behavior, his unpredictable conduct and states of mind, while presenting problems for a king, place him very securely in the line of the 'judges' (I Sam. 10:5-13).

The crisis he was "called" to deal with was surely the most dangerous in the two hundred years of Amphictyonic existence. The

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[1] Noth (pp. 176-77) insists on two years as the duration of Saul's reign. He is alone in this opinion.

[2] Kaufmann, p. 265. Von Rad agrees (p. 36).

Philistines who had arrived in the land not long after the Israelites themselves had grown from an occasional nuisance into a major power bent on seizing all the tribal lands. Led by a group of city-state kings acting in concert, they amassed a formidable military machine. Supported by what seems to have been a monopoly on iron together with a considerable chariot force, they had, by the time of Saul, effectively subjugated the Israelite tribes. The land was invested; the central shrine at Shiloh destroyed and the sacred Ark itself captured by the enemy. After two hundred years of successful resistance to aggression from various surrounding nations, the Amphictyony had fallen before this newly emergent power. The mythic Kingdom, having lost its historical dynamic was unable to repell the inroads of the warriors of the earthly-historical reality of Philistia. Clearly something new was called for.[1]

The election of Saul is dealt with in two separate accounts in the Book of Samuel. These two stories reveal the theologically self-contradictory Israelite view of the monarchy. In one account, Samuel enthusiastically anoints Saul; in the other, later version, Samuel resists the idea of monarchy and only accedes to the urging of the tribal elders when God Himself gives His rather grudging consent (I Sam. 8:10-22). If Samuel is taken here to represent the old Amphictyonic order, we can readily see that both stories are accurate reflections of the conflicting needs of the moment. The mythic Kingdom would indeed protest against self-historicization on the grounds that the appointment of an earthly king would be a repudiation of God, Israel's mythic ruler. "They have rejected me from being king over them" (I Sam. 8:7).

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[1] Von Rad disagrees with this view (pp. 36-39). He holds that the changeover from what he terms the "archaic piety" of the Amphictyony to the national self-consciousness of the monarchy was more the result of an internal spiritual alteration than external politico-cultural pressures. He never analyzes this "change of heart" but finds evidence of "demoralization of custom" in the early chapters of I Samuel. We must dispute this view. There is no evidence that the mythic Kingdom of God--its theological premises and its cultic expressions--was any weaker at the end of the period of the 'judges' than it had been a century earlier. Apostasy had always been a problem and, as we have seen, the absence of socio-political organization as well as of dynamic historical consciousness were evidences of the strength, not the weakness of the all-encompassing myth. The decisive factors necessitating abandonment of the myth were all external to Israel. History, with its new challenges and threats, pressed in upon the mythic Kingdom which had left its own earlier history behind. And, as always, all that is required for a realized eschatological myth to collapse, is for something new to happen.

At the same time, however the mythic order might want to deny it, life is not static; new conditions arise to challenge the mythic attempt to freeze reality. People, even subjects of God's Kingdom do live on this earth in the midst of the uncertain tides of history. Clearly, a united Israelite front was called for to oppose the overwhelming power of the Philistines. No 'judge' had ever led a unified national army into battle. It was of the very nature of the 'judge's' calling that his efforts were localized and restricted to the deliverance of his own tribe. The mythic Kingdom of the Amphictyony could not provide the political machinery necessary for a general military mobilization without historicizing itself into a new kind of reality. This is precisely what took place at the time of Saul. He was a 'judge' in all save his claim upon the tribal confederation as a whole. It was this claim which both united the nation politically for the first time and made Saul something more than the last of the 'judges.' He was a national rather than a tribal 'judge.' In this sense alone he was Israel's first earthly king.

Saul's place in the line of the 'judges' is pointed up by the fact that Samuel, whatever his mixed feelings may have been, did agree to anoint him king thus placing the official seal on the in-rush of the Divine Spirit which had already indicated Saul's Divine election. The story is strikingly reminiscent of Moses' passing on the mantel of leadership to Joshua. But, despite these traditional references, it was apparent to all that Saul also represented something quite new in Israel. Public anointment had never been necessary in the case of the 'judges.' Their leadership had been only for a season, and for that Divine inspiration was sufficient. When the crisis passed, the Lord would withdraw the spirit with which he had animated the chosen 'judge.' The act of anointing can be seen as an expression of a double desire on the part of the now prostrate tribal league. It represents the attempt to create two factors hitherto absent in Israel: political unity and historical permanence.[1] In both cases, the wish proved to be years in advance of the reality.

The later Samuel-Saul story (I Sam. 8:5) refers to Israel's desire to have a king "like the nations" roundabout them, but in fact Saul's monarchy bears little resemblance to the classic Middle Eastern model of the time. He acts primarily--in the tradition of the 'judges'--as an emergency military leader. No sooner is he acclaimed at Gilgal than he picks an elite military corps to march against the Philistine enemy. In this he is immediately responsive to the conditions which brought him to power. His initial success against the Philistines must have reassured any lingering doubters that this man did indeed bear the spirit of God. The fact that this success was won by means of a newly established standing army seems to have caused no negative comment despite the fact that such an institution was hitherto unknown in Israel and struck a blow at the ancient tribal system of clan levies. Similarly his appointment of military captains and his establishment of a rustic citadel at Gibeah seems to have been accepted by the old order without protest.

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[1] Noth, p. 171.

However, the tensions inherent in the situation could not long remain suppressed. A new historic order was usurping the prerogatives of the old mythic reality.[1] A radical redefinition of what it meant to be an Israelite was taking place. It was inevitable that soon or late the eternal Kingdom of God and the newly founded kingdom of Saul would come to a crisis. And so they did. As we had two accounts of Samuel and Saul's initial relationship, so now we have two accounts of the origins of the quarrel which made them enemies. But in the latter case, both accounts tell essentially the same story in the sense that they focus on the central issue of myth versus history. In the first account, Saul is pictured as taking to himself the cultic function of Samuel (I Sam. 13-15); in the second he refuses Samuel's command to utterly destroy the Amelekites (I Sam. 15). This second story requires explanation because it so sharply points up the conflict between the mythic and historic realities.

The _herem_ or practice of "utter destruction" of an enemy was an established Amphictyonic tradition. It was not a measure of the victor's bloodlust but rather a primitive act of sacrifice--in fact, the only example of human sacrifice ever practiced as part of the Israelite cult.[1] War, for the tribes, had been primarily a religious act. Its cause was the fulfilment of the Divine promise of the land; its decisive factor was the power of God which led Israel to victory. The herem was Israel's response for those victories, an act of consecration or devotion in which the fruits of success, save the land itself which already belonged to God, were not taken by the victors but were offered to the One who had made the triumph possible. It was, in its way, an act of unselfish renunciation, a national affirmation of the Divine Captain who led Israel's hosts. The herem made sense only in the purely mythic context of tribal life; politically it deprived Israel of treasure, slaves and possible vassals who might be useful as allies in further conquest.

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[1] This is the essential point of the shift from myth to history. Politically the Israelite monarchy would eventually model itself on foreign political systems, but theologically the role of the earthly king of Israel was modeled on that of the Heavenly Monarch who had ruled them heretofore. The human element which had been excluded in Israel's original theologizing of ancient monarchy (probably the Egyptian model primarily) was now being re-introduced, thus removing the all encompassing nature of the myth which had been the unique feature of Israelite thought.

In refusing to carry out the herem against Amelek Saul was acting out a new, realistic, political consciousness. But to the mythic understanding of Samuel he was holding back from the Lord what was rightfully His. To question, to reason, to defy tradition was to cut away the very foundations of the mythic kingdom in which God's eternal commands are everything and man's variable thoughts and feelings are seen as threats to the unchanging Divine reality.

This incident marks the split between the mythic and historic kingdoms in Israel. Even before the break over the Amelekites Samuel and Saul had represented two realities: the Divine and the human.

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[1] The failure of Biblical scholars to see the herem as a form of ritual human sacrifice is probably due to their intoxication with the "Old Testament against its environment" insistence on Israelite uniqueness in the realm of ethics. In fact, here as elsewhere, what is unique is the manner in which Israel adopted and reshaped earlier practice.

It is a truism that the latter can never fulfil the demands of the former. The uncompromising pressing of those demands gave the Israelite religion its compelling moral force but, at the same time, it rendered Israel's political existence as divisive and strife-torn as any in the history of nations.

Following the Amelekite incident "Samuel never beheld Saul again until the day of his death" (I Sam. 15:35). The text clearly identifies Samuel as speaking for God in rejecting Saul, for at Samuel's word, God regrets having made Saul king and withdraws His spirit from him. In fact, He goes further and replaces that positive spirit with an evil spirit from the Lord (I Sam. 16:14-23). It is as if we are once again in the old mythic Kingdom now cut loose from its temporary political expression by Saul's disobedience. But once history has had its way, there can be no returning to pre-historic conditions. The Philistines still threatened. The crisis that called for unified leadership had not abated. A return to the purely mythical Kingdom was out of the question. If Saul no longer represented the historic kingdom, some other earthly expression had to be found.

In the career of David we find the classic model of Israelite kingship, of the historical expression of the Kingdom of God. Departing from Saul, the Divine Spirit soon lighted upon David, the old king's former armor bearer. The elements to note are both the perpetuation of the charismatic inspiration theme of Amphictyonic days and its rather diluted effect. We are told that "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David" (I Sam. 16:13), but while this link with the past is mentioned, it is deliberately underplayed. Here the emphasis is on the anointing rather than on the inspiration. Unlike Saul, David will be a true king, not merely a national 'judge.' Yet one more step has been taken in the movement from the mythic to the historic kingdom.

David is privately anointed while Saul still lives and rules. But Divine sanction having been withdrawn, the old king's end is inevitable. That end comes with the successful Philistine counterattack in which both Saul and Jonathan his son lose their lives. Following the tragedy, David is anointed once again, this time by the assembled six southern tribes (Judah and its satellites).[1] Although initially given religious sanction by Samuel, the course of David's rise to power is from here on purely military and political. In fact, the story of David's climb to the throne contains no mythic elements whatsoever. It is, on the contrary, a unified, step by step account of closely connected historical events making a whole such as we have not yet seen in the Biblical text. Those scholars who see in this story literature's first example of true history properly so-called are probably correct. Such an orderly sequential account pre-supposes the new historical mode of thought inaugurated during the period of David. The episodic structure of the Book of Judges gives way to an orderly cause-and-effect series of events in which God's will is revealed not in implosive momentary revelations but in the unfolding of a human story leading to the enthronement of the king. Along the way there are further indications of the growing historical consciousness. We begin to see the term "Judah" used to designate not just one of twelve tribes of the ancient confederacy, but a new political unit of Southern Israel--a historical-geographic entity, rather than a mythic clan title. "Israel" too is used to designate a political unit--the six northern tribes--again a geographic rather than spiritual appellation.

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[1] Noth, pp. 182-83, treats these events with particular skill.

Following a period of civil war, David is elected king by the six northern tribes, that is, "Israel." It would seem that this "election" was primarily a political act which received religious sanction only secondarily. David had become king of two separate political entities. Just when "Judah" and "Israel" replaced the twelve tribes as terms of self-identification for the people is not known but by the time of David, the change had taken place. Since these two groupings had no basis whatever in tradition, no attempt was made to give them religious validation. History and geography had simply supplanted myth as the new joint kingdom had replaced the tribal confederacy. And in yet another crucial particular the earthly king now stood in the stead of the Divine Monarch of the Amphictyony. Previously whatever unity the tribes had had was the result of their common allegiance to the God of Israel. Now a new force united Israel and Judah: the earthly king. One could go further and say that he was soon to become the only uniting force of any kind since following Solomon's death the common devotion to God proved insufficient to hold the two sections together in the absence of strong political leadership. It is uncertain whether Saul reigned over Israel for two years or twenty years, but even if the latter (outside) figure is correct, one can only marvel at the staggering changes that had taken place in this relatively short period.

David proved to be a military genius of the first rank. He conquered the Philistines completely and proceeded to build an impressive empire. His every move revealed the distance he had led his people from the ancient mythic reality. Now all was politics, geography and economics--the stuff of which history not myth is made. He chose as his capital a Canaanite city with a non-Israelite population. The reasons for his choice of Jerusalem are clear enough. It was the city's geographical location between the territories of Judah and Israel that made it the ideal seat for the king who was to hold the two states together. It is true that he moved the ancient tribal sacred object--the Ark--to his new city. But this move is to be seen more as a religious legitimation of the new political reality than as a return to the mythic past. The city, with no tribal associations whatever, became known as the City of David. Within it the Ark was placed to be served by a priesthood made up of royal functionaries.[1]

As David's empire expanded he went far beyond the absorption of Canaanite peoples. Now Ammonites, Edomites, Syrians and others were incorporated into his multi-national political holdings. The herem, violation of which had caused Saul's downfall, had become a long-forgotten relic of a dead mythic past. New peoples were now welcomed within the empire which in ethnic terms had long since ceased to be a true Israelite state.

Despite these radical departures from the past, despite the rule of realpolitik in David's Jerusalem, this polyglot empire was seen by many as the ultimate expression of God's will for Israel. Nathan the prophet was a constant presence in David's palace. But unlike Samuel who had represented an independent mythic Kingdom, Nathan had performed the remarkable feat of totally identifying this infanct monarchy with the will of the Eternal One of Israel. To David he had said in the name of the Lord, "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever . . ." (II Sam. 7:16), thus making the mythic and the historical kingdoms effectively one and the same. Nathan's moral thunderings at David's sexual indiscretions are pale stuff beside the all embracing Kingdom of Power Samuel had championed. History had indeed overtaken and co-opted myth.[1]

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[1] II Samuel 8:15-18 lists priests along with army officers and secretaries as royal appointees. It should not surprise us that the king's sons were named to the priesthood and apparently with no protest from Samuel. Thus does history swallow up mythology.

The royal succession after David merely continued and intensified the historicizing process. By this time no one even bothered to pretend that Solomon had been chosen by Divine will. His designation as king was, as everyone knew, the result of one of the many ugly intrigues that had festered in the palace during David's waning years. His construction of the Temple was a munificent and, doubtless, sincere expression of his desire for Divine approval of his reign. That he considered his kingdom to be God's Kingdom is not in doubt. But one can ask just what that meant to him when he showed no hesitation in completing his father's work of destroying once sacred tribal identities by dividing northern Israel into administrative districts whose boundaries deliberately cut across ancient tribal boundaries.[2] Now to be an Israelite meant to be a resident of a particular royal district.[1] The intent was to destroy all loyalties save that owed the king. The Temple itself was actually set within the precincts of the palace grounds. This was Solomon's Temple build to house Solomon's God. His notorious use of Israelite slave labor to build his monumental projects (I Kings 5:13-18) together with his politically motivated toleration of pagan cults (I Kings 11:1-8) mark the ultimate step in the journey begun a century earlier when the Israelite elders demanded that Samuel give them a king "like the nations." Now they had one, and, like the nations, they had been transformed into a politico-historical kingdom.

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[1] The relegation of religion to the sexual sphere of life has become the standard method of de-mythologizing all other aspects of existence.

[2] Noth (p. 217) holds that the new administrative boundaries followed the old tribal borders, while Bright (p. 200) states that the opposite was usually the case. The administrative list in I Kings 4:7-19 would seem to support Bright. The additional fact that Canaanite peoples and territories together with Amorites and others, were lumped in with Israelites in a seemingly indiscriminate manner in this reorganization further demonstrates Solomon's intent to obscure all loyalty save that to the crown.

2. Characteristics of Israelite Historical Thought

The rise of the monarchy in Israel represented a radical departure from the mythic conception of the Kingdom of God, and the emergence of the historical kingdom as the focus of a new Israelite self-understanding. It is readily understandable that many scholars have seen this all-important change quite differently. They have contended that with the monarchy Israelite thought became mythical rather than sacred-historical; that the freely acting God of history conceived of in Amphictyonic theology now became imprisoned within the unchanging institutions of Temple and monarchy. Now we have sought to demonstrate that Amphictyonic theology was, in fact, mythical and even eschatological rather than historic in conception. The original Mosaic-Joshuan creative-dynamic theology of an earlier period had, with the establishment of the mythic Kingdom of the Divine King, lost its historical dimension. We must now show that with the monarchy myth gave way to history in the truest sense.

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[1] Noth comments: "It is remarkable that we have no information about any corresponding division of the kingdom of Judah into districts by Solomon" (p. 212). However, what is remarkable is that Noth finds this remarkable. If Solomon's intent was to replace tribal loyalties with loyalty to the king, it is hardly surprising that he would avoid dividing Judah, his own native area and one which had, since David's advent, seen its *raison d'etre* as being the birthplace and stronghold of the monarchy. In other words, the reason for breaking up northern Israel into royal districts was precisely the same as that prompting Solomon *not* to divide Judah which was *de facto* already the largest and most loyal royal district in the kingdom.

We have said that myth presents a static view of institutions, a repetitive non-progressive view of events, and a heteronomous view of man. History, then, as the reverse of this conceptual coin expresses a developing conception of institutions, a progressive, dynamic picture of unfolding events, and an autonomous view of man. With these criteria in mind, let us attempt to analyze the new conception of the kingdom as it emerged under the Davidic monarchy.

Those scholars who stress the mythic dimensions of the thought of this period point to the fully developed Davidic theology which emerged at court. Nathan inaugurated this new theory in which David was given eternal possession of the throne for himself and his descendants. The mythic nature of this theology emerges even more clearly in the "enthronement psalms" recited at royal coronations. We need only quote the most famous of them, Psalm 2:6-7:

> "I [the Lord] have set my king
>   on Zion, my holy hill."
> . . . "You [David] are my son,
>   today I have begotten you."

The imagery is highly mythical. Here we have all the classic elements. The monarchy is a static, eternal institution; the key event is the enthronement of the king, an event repeated periodically and ever the same; the human actor is passive in the drama, is king only because God has chosen him and is, as God's adopted son, totally dependent on his Divine Father. Stasis, repetition, heteronomy--who would deny that the official Davidic theology was thoroughly mythical? However, we must inquire further into the purposes for which the myth was formulated, into whether it was a natural development of the Israelite imagination or an artificial construction aimed at supporting a non-mythical reality.

We have noted that Amphictyonic theology had allowed for no ongoing human institutions. In this it was even more completely mythical than the usual mythic system which contained institutions of a static and derivative type. The Israelites had feared even these due to the danger inherent in any introduction of human institutions to the holistic nature of the Divine government. The monarchy was such an institution. The human element had entered the sphere of power previously reserved for the Divine. With this new development, the battle between the mythic and historical kingdoms was joined. The official Davidic theology was an attempt by the court propagandists to co-opt the myth, to legitimize the human reality by placing it in a mythic framework. This had not been true during the Amphictyonic period. The very lack of ongoing institutions during that time attests to the genuineness and all-encompassing nature of the mythic mentality. One can doubt the sincerity of a nation's claim to be led by an invisible King; but, when that nation in fact refuses to choose a human king as a consequence of that claim, all doubts must cease. Myth has triumphed over history.

But in the monarchic period Israel's royal theology--which remained mythical--grew more and more remote from actual events as experienced historically by the nation. The evidence of this split between the official theology and the nation's historical self-conception is in the literature produced during this period.

The Davidic-Solomonic court was the brilliant, creative center of a new explosion of intellectual energy in Israel. Within a remarkably short period of time a rustic, disorganized tribal association had been transformed into a modern imperial domain of considerable prestige and power. The corresponding radical alteration in Israel's self-image was brilliantly expressed in the literary creations of the time. At least three major works were produced during this period and all three were heavily historical, two of them thoroughly so.

It was at the court of Solomon that the great historic work of the Yahwist was probably composed. This was no collection of unrelated, episodic tales of God's miraculous interventions on behalf of his people as in the age of the 'judges.' Here, for the first time, was a progressive, connected narrative of a thoroughly teleogical nature in which God's presence is discovered primarily in the flow of, rather than in the interruption of, historical events. The Divine will expresses itself in human action and, although God is the ultimate director of the story, man is no mere puppet but is endowed with free will throughout. Man may misuse his autonomy, as in Eden, but it is precisely his to misuse. The focus is on human as well as Divine action, on the inner workings of man's mind ("So Cain was very angry" [Gen. 4:5].) as well as God's ("And the Lord was sorry that he had made man" [Gen. 6:6].). The errors, misjudgments, inconsistencies and contradictions included in the narrative are all characteristic of human life--real human life--historical human life. Most remarkably, even God is conceived in essentially human and historic terms as a dynamic developing personality who grows with and learns from his human creatures. The Yahwist epic represented an incalculably great step forward in human self-understanding. Focusing on the human, there was less talk of miracles and more concentration on psychology. God said less but accomplished more by influencing the ongoing historical events rather than breaking into them in isolated miraculous occurrences. The Yahwist document was richly humanistic and profoundly historical. As such it reflected the new spirit of the monarchic age in which, the official Davidic theology to the contrary notwithstanding, man emerged for the first time on the center stage of what can now be called genuine history.

This history, however, had its mythic aspect. It was humanistic but not yet completely secularized. Man might be the principal actor in the story but God's will was conceived as the ultimate guiding principle revealed in dreams, visions and auditions. It remained for the two other literary productions of this epoch to totally secularize the Israelite view of human life by presenting a thoroughly historicized conception of the kingdom.

Two court histories were produced at this time, the first containing an account of David's rise to the throne (I Sam. 16:14-II Sam. 5:12), the second relating the story of Solomon's accession to the kingship (II Sam. 6:12, 20ff.-I Kings 2). The dominant conceptual framework of both was historical and secularistic. God remained hidden throughout. Man was ever in the forefront of the action. Events unfolded in cause and effect sequence in accordance with an inner logic of their own. No miracles or episodic Divine intrusions were allowed. This was political history with political causes and political effects.

And here again, human autonomy, individual emotional life, man's skill or error accounted for events. And those events were once for all, dynamic, progressive and ongoing. The drama was heightened by insightful psychological descriptions and expressive speeches in which the strikingly real human characters revealed their complex inner lives.

It is in these remarkable literary productions that we find the true reflection of the newly emergent historical humanism of the monarchic period. Man takes center stage in these epics as he did in the Israel of David and Solomon. The myth became the coating of traditional piety spread over the historical reality. Although officially the Kingdom of the invisible Monarch, Israel became in fact the domain of an earthly king who must have been fully aware--as was the writer of the histories discussed above--that he had won his throne by virtue of his own efforts without resort to direct Divine intervention. This is not to say that the Davidic kings consciously rejected the mythic conceptions of the official theology. But the actual conduct of these rulers together with the non-mythological nature of the literary works produced at court would lead us to conclude that it was historic rather than mythic consciousness that dominated Israel at this time, a consciousness seemingly shared by the great majority of the populace and which remained dominant until the total collapse of the historical kingdom before the war machines of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

C. Recovering the Myth

1. The Prophets' Anti-Historical Polemic

As we have seen, the Israelite attitude toward the Kingdom was, from the time of Gideon, divided against itself. The protest in the name of the mythological Kingdom against the historic monarchy was voiced by Samuel even before he aquiesced to the demands of the "political realists" to anoint an earthly king. This human ruler was to "govern us and go out before us, and fight our battles" (I Sam. 8:20) just as the Lord had done during His mythic rule. We have further seen that in its first three representatives, the monarchy changed steadily from the comparatively limited national charismatic "judgeship" of Saul, through the increasingly politicized empire of David, to the secularized reign of Solomon. This process of secularization is not to be understood as a total eclipse of the myth, but rather as a domestication of a once autonomous reality. The historic kingdom saw itself as the new embodiment of the mythic reality and, as such, denied the crucial power of the Divine Kingdom to invade earthly life. Stripped of its potency, the myth became a shadow--and, more than that, a tool in the hands of political power. In the Israelite passage from tribal to monarchical existence we see a crucial reversal of essential categories. Where history had been limited by and placed in the service of myth, now the myth was co-opted by and maintained in order to serve history.

From the very beginnings of the monarchy, the reduction of the myth to a subservient position had been a major goal. Saul himself had attempted this, but had lacked the power to carry it out. Both stories of his fall from grace begin with the accounts of his clash with the prophet-judge Samuel. Saul's offering of the official sacrifice in Samuel's place (I Sam. 13:9-12) and his refusal to abide by the prophet's command to enforce the herem(I Sam. 15:9) must be seen as intrusions of political judgments and earthly royal pretensions on the absolute mythic order. Saul was merely fulfilling the expectations of the elders who had demanded an earthly king, but he was deliberately defying the prophet who alone had had the power to anoint him. The issues which caused Saul's downfall ceased to matter in later years: when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem, David himself offered sacrifice (II Sam. 6:17) as did Solomon during the temple dedication (I Kings 8:62) and Jeroboam at a similar ceremony (I Kings 12:32). And, as we have seen, the herem was quickly abandoned by all subsequent monarchs. That no protest was lodged in the name of the myth to these radical changes is evidence of the increasing power of the historic kingdom over the waning myth.

That this apparently total victory proved to be illusory and impermanent is the central fact of the next chapter of Israelite history: the emergence of the prophets.

As spokesmen for God, possessing no state office (we are speaking here not of the "false" prophets attached as official "yes-men" to the royal court) or autonomous power, the prophets stood squarely in the line of the 'judges.' Like them, they were the chosen representatives of the true Divine King of Israel, the mythical Monarch, and of His Kingdom of power. Samuel is often correctly seen as the link between 'judge' and prophet. He can properly be considered the first of the latter category since, like them, he expresses the spirit of the Lord which has possessed him, primarily by means of the word rather than the sword, as had the earlier 'judges.' But there is another vital link between Samuel and the later prophets. For all of them, beginning with Samuel, the central conception of the Kingdom of God, implicitly assumed or explicitly expressed, dominates their utterances. That the Kingdom of the prophets is the mythic Kingdom and that it provides the standpoint from which they launch their attacks against the historic kingdom will be made clear by an examination of the prophets' own words.

Samuel was the first. From his initial defense of the mythic Kingdom against the assaults of the historical monarchy, Israelite history becomes a continuing contest between king and prophet, history and myth. In this contest there was to be no surcease until the destruction of the historical kingdom in 586 B.C. (The battle would be taken up again in new form during the Maccabean period, as will be discussed below.)

Micaiah

Following Samuel, the next prophetic spokesman for the mythological Kingdom of God is Micaiah. Solomon and the united empire have long since passed away. The kingdom, now split in two is ruled by Ahab in the north (Israel) and Jehoshaphat in the south (Judah). The story is a vivid one. The two kings are pictured in all their earthly arrogance "sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes" (I Kings 22:10). Encouraged by the flattering words of their "false" court prophets, the two monarchs inquire of the "true" prophet, Micaiah, whether to proceed with their plans to attack the Syrian forces. Micaiah responds by immediately dismissing the claims of historical monarchy in Israel. "I saw all Israel [Judah and Israel] scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd; and the Lord said, 'These have no master; let each return to his home in peace'" (I Kings 22:17). This vision is often thought to be of the soon-to-be-defeated armies of Israel. In fact, what we have here is a much more comprehensive picture of the people of Israel coming to the realization that the kings in whom they trusted are not true shepherds. Their earthly masters have faded away. It is the Lord's will that each "return to his home in peace." Do we have here a reference to the tribes living in their traditional "home" territories? It is hard to say whether Micaiah combines an Amphictyonic social viewpoint with his anti-monarchic vision.

However, in one particular, he is very much in the tradition of earliest tribal mythology. His vision continues to unfold: "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left" (I Kings 22:19). Here is the true King of Israel. The earthly "masters," the false "shepherds" have dissolved to reveal the mythic King and His everlasting Kingdom. How absurd the earthly monarchs seem, all "done up" in their pompous robes and surrounded by their legion of false prophets. They are but a ridiculous parady of the splendor of the King and His heavenly court. The prophet's message is in the contrast: the truth and power of the mythic Kingdom puts to shame the foolishness of the historical reality.

Micaiah's scorn for the actual, historical kingdom is shared by all the prophets who followed him. Each of them is, in his own way, so caught up in the power of the myth out of which he speaks, that all historic attempts at political, social or religious reformation are rejected out of hand. The prophets are one in their radical insistence on the total destruction of all existing state institutions.[1] History, as it is experienced in the secularized, earthly kingdom, is coming to a cataclysmic close. The historic kingdom must pass away so that the mythic monarchy can once again enfold all Israel as subjects of the Divine King. Once again, the all-embracing, absolute monotheism of the Amphictyonic royal theology will sweep away all earthly institutions and autonomous historic constructions.

The sin of the historic kingdom had been its belief in its own self-sufficiency. The God of power who had initially caused His spirit to descend on Saul had, by the time of Solomon, been reduced to a cultic deity effectively banished from the daily life of the nation. History emerged for the first time in a secularized form. Political, social and economic life had been severed from the holistic myth of the tribes. Warfare had become the king's province and responsibility and the Divine "man of war" hymned at the Reed Sea (Ex. 15:3) retreated to His "Holy of Holies" where He sat enthroned as a mere figurehead, enshrouded by darkness, remote from His people.

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[1] Bright insists that the prophets never ". . . called for the destruction of the state and the monarchy as a sinful institution . . . [and] never attacked existing institutions as such or advocated their replacement by other institutions" (Bright, The Kingdom of God, p. 116). This view is totally at odds with our contention that the attack on the political kingdom runs through the entire prophetic polemic. It is not that the prophets sought to replace one set of human institutions with another. Their demand was more radical than that. They sought the overthrow of the entire historical framework upon which the monarchy rested and its replacement with a mythic order of things in which the need for human institutions would be obviated.

The division of the empire following Solomon's death brought no essential change. While hereditary Davidic rule continued in Judah, Israel adopted--or, rather, stumbled into--a political non-system in which the throne was usually occupied by the strongest. Although all attempts to establish an Israelite dynasty failed, this was not because of any return in the north to a charismatic view of monarchy. Jereboam, the first king of northern Israel was a palace conspirator against Solomon whose success was attributed to the fact that he was "very able." Assured by Ahijah the prophet that God had chosen him to rule the ten northern tribes, he fled to Egypt, returning after the old king's death to be elected king over the north (I Kings 11-12). Despite the religious sanction of the prophet's words (reminiscent of the prophecy of Nathan), the process described is totally historic in the most mundane sense. Jereboam is no ecstatic and the kingdom he founds bears no resemblance to the old tribal confederacy.

Amos

Micaiah's vision of the heavenly King sets the tone of the antihistorical mythic protest in the north. A century later Amos and Hosea intensified the attack on earthly monarchy and predicted its total disappearance. Amos refers to God's saving acts in the liberation from Egypt and the conquest of the land (Amos 2:10). He continues his usage of Amphictyonic theological images as God reminds His people of how He "raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites" (Amos 2:11). Certain of the 'judges' had been called prophets (Samuel) and others (Sampson) Nazirites. Such were raised up by the Lord. Nowhere do we find a similar account of the origins of the historic kingdom. On the contrary, Amos declares:

> "Woe to those who lie upon beds of ivory,
> . . . .
> who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,
> and like David invent for themselves instruments of music;
> . . . .
> and anoint themselves with the finest oils,
> (Amos 6:4-6)

It seems apparent that Amos is not simply denouncing the Israelite upper class, as most scholars seem to imagine. His imagery is Davidic; his target is the entire monarchic tradition stretching back to David. It has all been "an idle song," both in Judah and in Israel. The prophet deliberately mocks the harp of David which had been seen as symbolic of the young king's Divine inspiration. He reminds his hearers that David, not God, had invented it, as David, not God, had founded the monarchy. Finally the ritual anointing of David as well as of all the kings of Judah and Israel is scorned as a self-anointing, an act of pride rather than piety.

But if the historic kingdom is an impotent burlesque, its mythic counterpart is preparing to come with power:

> "Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom,
> and I will destroy it from the surface of the ground;
> except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,"
> says the Lord.
> (Amos 9:8)

The historic kingdom is, in its very historicity, sinful; it will end. The people--at least some of them--will remain. Whether Amos' last word is found in his prediction of the scattering of Israel among the nations (Amos 9:9) or in the disputed last verses which envision an idyllic restoration to the land (Amos 9:13-15), the mythic dimension is uppermost. With the political kingdom swept away, only the mythic Kingdom is left. Even in dispersion, the people remain "the house of Jacob," an entity united by loyalty to the mythic King as in the tribal period. The mythological images are even more powerful in the concluding passages with their references to mountains dripping with sweet wine and flowing hills so reminiscent of the pre-Amphictyonic land of promise (Ex. 3:8). It is God Himself who "will restore the fortunes of my people Israel" even as He had done during the period of the Judges when He was "all in all." That He shall be so again is the promise of mythic renewal spoken by the prophet.

Hosea

Hosea continued the anti-historic polemic in the name of a vision even more clearly mythical than that of Amos. His denunciation of the monarchy is complete and includes the rule of Saul as well as David:

> Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal;
>   there I began to hate them.
> (Hos. 9:15)
>
> Hearken, O house of the king!
>   For the judgment pertains to you;
> for you have been a snare at Mizpah,
> (Hos. 5:1)

(Gilgal and Mizpah, the two sites of Saul's double anointing: I Sam. 10:17 and 11:14)

> All their kings have fallen;
>   and none of them calls upon me.
> (Hos. 7:7)
>
> They made kings, but not through me.
>   They set up princes, but without my knowledge.
> (Hos. 8:4)
>
> For Israel has forgotten his Maker,
>   and built palaces;
> (Hos. 8:14)

One could hardly conceive of a clearer or more all-encompassing attack on the institution of monarchy. But all of it had been said long before by Samuel as he defended the mythic Kingdom against the necessarily corrupt political reality. Now that reality was about to come to a cataclysmic end:

> I will destroy you, O Israel;
>   who can help you?
> Where now is your king, to save you;
>   where are all your princes, to defend you--
> those of whom you said,
>   "Give me a king and princes"?
> I have given you kings in my anger,
>   and I have taken them away in my wrath.
> (Hos. 13:11)

Again, the demands of the people for a king in the days of Samuel are referred to. God, who fulfilled their desire in His wrath, will now obliterate all human pretension to rule in Israel.

And once again, the vision of the latter days is seen in terms of a renewal of the mythical Kingdom of God's all-embracing presence as at the beginning. All historic institutions will vanish following the great destruction. There will be only Israel--changed internally and externally--and her God--ever the same.

> I will heal their faithlessness;
>   I will love them freely,
>   for my anger has turned from them.
> I will be as the dew to Israel;
>   . . . .
>   his beauty shall be like the olive
>   and his fragrance like Lebanon.
> They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow, . . .
> (Hos. 14:4-7)

This untroubled and unchanging mythic fulfilment will mean an end of historical development. Its ideal dimension--individuals who are perfect in their single-minded faithfulness to God, and a transformed nation beautiful, fragrant and dwelling in the Divine presence--enlarge the vision beyond the realm of history into that of myth.

2. The Messiah and the Prophets' Mythic Kingdom

At this point in our review of prophetic thought, we must begin to take note of an emerging conception which was to become of central importance in the royal theology of Israel. This conception--the Messianic ideal--represents a mythological co-option of the historic monarchy in the same sense that the monarchy itself had been an historical appropriation of the functions of the Divine King of earlier Israelite myth. As we have stated, the dialectical movement from myth to history and back again is the characteristic pattern of Jewish thought. However, like all historical dialectics, this movement is not absolute. That is to say, one age does not cancel out the other. The mythic age does, in a sense, contain history rather than negate it. People must, after all, live day to day lives in which one event succeeds another in linear fashion. However, these events are not seen as historical in that they are denied all meaning in themselves and become part of a larger pattern pointing to a transcendent source as well as a transcendent pre-determined end. Thus does myth swallow up history, not by stopping events--this is hardly possible--but by encasing them in a larger mythic framework which, despite the activity it contains, is ultimately unmoving and eternal.

In a similar manner, when the pendulum swings toward historical consciousness, as in the Davidic period, myth does not disappear, but remains as the servant of history--the formal justification for acts and events which are, in fact, perceived as the historical doings of historical men.

The Messianic idea is the ultimate expression of the power of the myth to incorporate and thus conquer its earthly-historical opposition--that of the Davidic kingship. As we have seen, the earliest

Israelite theology saw God Himself as the sole King of His people; Davidic theology had continued to speak of God as the ultimate King, but had, in fact, dethroned Him by placing most of His original functions in the hands of an earthly monarch (myth in the service of history); the prophets had arrived dramatically on the scene thundering their denunciations of the historical reality in the name of the mythic Kingdom of God. But, at some point, the original myth of the Divine Monarch was expanded to make room for the figure of a human king. Now this development was highly ironic. For this Messianic ruler was no ordinary human being, but an ideal vision of the perfect Davidic king who would reign in the distant future after the collapse of the historical kingdom. The irony lay in the fact that this ideal vision was based on the figure of David which had been blown up to mythic proportions by the propagandists of the Jerusalem court. The very myth used at court as ideological window dressing for a thoroughly historical reality was given new life by the prophets. In detaching it from the socio-political reality of the Jerusalem kings, and attaching it to the larger myth of the Kingdom of God, the Messianic prophets were merely taking seriously the Davidic theory that the earthly king ruled for, and by virtue of the power of, the heavenly Monarch.

Now, we are not suggesting any special perfidy or deceit among the Jerusalem court theorists. It was, and always is, in the very nature of historical reality that myths--once they are given historical substance--fade away to mere justifications. But, in the mouths of the Messianic prophets, the myth that had become no more than an excuse for the historical Jerusalem court reality, now, re-vitalized and cut loose from history, found that historical reality to be without excuse. The

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Messiah figure became the ideal in the name of which to denounce the historical dynasty that had created it.

By the term "Messiah" we mean that eschatological ruler--human, yet ideally so and thus of mythic dimension--who would rule, not now but in a mythic age to come. In true mythical fashion, his rule would be non-autonomous, that is, wholly dependent on, and expressive of, the larger rule of God. Another key element in true messianic prophecy was that this mythic age to come would follow on the total destruction of the historical Israelite state. A prophecy lacking this decisive event cannot be considered to be truly messianic, but is no more than a re-statement of the Davidic court propaganda myth. The court theory used the myth to defend and exalt the presently sitting king (or his immediate heir), while the messianic prophecy rejected the reigning kings in the name of an ideal Messiah king who was every thing the historical king was not.

Traditionally, any one of three pre-exilic prophets has been credited with originating the messianic hope which was to play such a central role in later Jewish theology. To say that this traditional view is open to question would be to engage in understatement. We must, therefore, examine the Books of Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah with an eye to discovering whether the figure of the Messiah actually appears as part of their respective witnesses to the power of the mythic Kingdom of God.

Isaiah

The issues surrounding the authorship of this book are too many and too complex to be treated here. Fortunately, we need only concern ourselves with the questions bearing directly on the subject of the Kingdom:

1) Did Isaiah announce the destruction of the earthly-historical kingdom of David?
2) Did he present a picture of a mythic age to come in which God will rule Israel?
3) Did he include in this picture the figure of an ideal king--the Messiah--who would represent God on earth as the Davidic king was supposed to have done according to the court theory?

These questions cannot be answered simply. First of all, we are faced with the infinitely complex issue of the authorship of the book. Just how many "Isaiahs" were there? We have no answer, or rather, so many that they begin to cancel each other out. And when did they live, these "Isaiahs"? Which of the oracles are pre-exilic and, therefore, of concern to us at this point? We are, of course, speaking here of only the first forty chapters of the book, but this hardly lessens the problem since so much post-exilic material has crept in here, too. The task of distinguishing these later insertions from original Isaiah material would be difficult enough, but it is further complicated by contradictions of tone and content in the messages of the pre-exilic prophet.[1]

The problem is best illustrated in chapter 7. Here we find the story of the meeting between the prophet and King Ahaz made famous by the later Christian appropriation of the Immanuel prophecy (vs. 14). The problem is that this hopeful word of the prophet seems completely tangled up with a prophecy of doom (vss. 17-25) supposedly delivered at the same time by the same prophet.

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[1] Lindblom divides "First Isaiah" as follows: Of chapters 1-35, 24 through 27 are post-exilic; 1 through 23 and 28 through 35 were originally discreet collections of Isaiah oracles. The "collection of the first order" comprised 6:1-9:6. The themes of this primary material are the military crises of 734 B.C.E. (with Syria and Northern Israel) and that of 901 B.C.E. (with Assyria). His comment that the order of the oracles in this last section is "rather confused" is classic Scandinavian understatement (J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967], p. 245).

Many scholars have attempted to solve the problem of this apparent contradiction. In our view, the most satisfactory solution has been put forward by Sheldon Blank who seems to have been the first to sucessfully disentangle what he views as two completely unrelated and mutually opposed statements.[1] How could the same Isaiah hold such contradictory views? Blank's point is that he could not. His rather remarkable theory as to the authorship of these two oracles is as follows.

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[1] Sheldon Blank, Prophetic Faith in Isaiah (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967), pp. 9-33. It will be impossible to communicate Blank's position (which is crucial for our understanding of Isaiah) without re-producing below the two totally separate prophecies, authored by different hands which have come down to us as hopelessly (until now) jumbled together in Isaiah 7. The reader is urged to read this short chapter in his Bible and then to compare the received text with the two disentangled oracles below. The translation is Blank's.

The Word of the Historical Isaiah

"(3a) And God said to me: 'Go now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear Yashub, (4) and you shall say to him: (13) "Hear, now, house of David! Is it too little for you to wary men that you weary my God as well? (17) [Therefore] the Lord will bring on you and your father's house such days as have not passed since Ephraim separated from Judah. (18) And on that day the Lord will whistle for the fly and for the bee (19) and they will all come and settle down in the steep ravines and clefts of rocks, on all thorn-bushes and all water-holes. (20) On that day the Lord will shave with a razor hired beyond the river; it will remove the hair of the head and the body hair and even the beard. (21) And on that day a man will keep alive one calf and two sheep. (23) And on that day briers and thorns will take over any place where there used to be a thousand vines worth a thousand silver pieces. (24) Armed with arrows and a bow will one enter there, for all the land will be briers and thorns. (25) And all the hills which used to be cultivated will be for letting cattle loose and for flocks to trample."'"

The Immanuel Prophecy

"(1) And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem for war against it but they were not able to conquer it. (2) And it was reported to the house of David, 'Syria has entered into an alliance with Ephraim'

Isaiah, son of Amoz, who began his prophetic career in 740 B.C.E. ("the year that King Uzziah died" [6:1]) was in the classic mold of previous prophecy. Typical of his denunciations of the Judean monarchy is the oracle delivered to Ahaz in chapter 14. The House of David "wearies" men and God (v. 13). Literally, God and His people are tired (better, sick and tired) of the historic monarchy. Its specific sin is not noted, perhaps because it is the very idea of earthly kingship that offends the prophet and his God (he says, "my" God, thus denying by implication that God is related in any way to Ahaz and his line). The oracle is essentially a threat. Destruction is about to rain down upon Judah because of the sinful monarchy. The prophet seems to have in mind the coming Assyrian invasion which he sees, of course, as caused by God (vss. 18 and 20) and symbolized by hostile natural forces.

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and his heart and the heart of his people swayed, as forest trees sway before the wind. (3) And God said to Isaiah: 'Go now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear Yashub unto the end of the conduit of the upper pool, to the way of the Fullers' Field. (4) And you shall say to him, "Take heed to keep calm; do not fear and let not your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the raging of Rezin and Syria, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah. (5) Because Syria [and] Ephraim and the son of Remaliah have devised harm against you saying, (6) 'Let us go up against Judah and break it up and conquer it for our side and set up as king in its midst the son of Tabeel,' (7) thus says the Lord God: It shall not stand and it shall not come to pass, (8a) for the head of Syria is Damascus and the head of Damascus Rezin, (9a) and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria the son of Remaliah.'" (10) And again Isaiah spoke to Ahaz saying, (9b) 'If you do not believe, (11) ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.' (12) But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, and I will not put God to the test.' (13) So he said, (14) 'Therefore God himself will give you a sign: behold a young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. (16) Indeed, before the boy will know to reject what is harmful and choose what is good the land will be forsaken whose two kings you dread.'"

Other oracles by this same prophet express the same thought. The justice of the Divine King will soon humble human sin and pretension to moral and political autonomy.

> Enter into the rock,
>   and hide in the dust
> from before the terror of the Lord,
>   and from the glory of his majesty. . . .
> The haughty looks of man shall be brought low,
>   and the pride of men shall be humbled;
> and the Lord alone will be exalted
>   in that day.
> (Is. 2:10-11)

The issue is God versus man; the sin is the latter's illusion of self-sufficiency. In response to such presumption, God thunders:

> Turn away from man
>   in whose nostrils is breath
>   for of what account is he?
> (Is. 2:22)

To whom then should Judah turn? To the One who called Isaiah to prophesy, the One who represents a royal power totally opposed to the House of David denounced in chapter 7. Isaiah has seen Him. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. . . . And I said: '. . . my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'" (Is. 6:1, 5).

For Isaiah, as for his prophetic forebears, there is only one King and only one Kingdom. Israel is a reality comprehensible only in mythic terms. Established by God as His own vineyard (ch. 5), its continued existence rests on invisible foundations which earthly-historical calculations can never measure. In fact, the role of the historic kingdom has been to obscure the mythic reality and, in so doing, to doom itself.

> Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said:
> "Until cities lie waste
> without inhabitant,
> and houses without men,
> and the land is utterly desolate,
> and the Lord removes men far away,
> (Is. 6:11-12a)

It would seem that destruction will be total at least in historical terms. Before discussion of what other terms the historical Isaiah may have had in mind, we turn to the Isaiah of the Immanuel prophecy.

Blank's argument holds that, while the words of the historical Isaiah foretold utter calamity for David's house at the hands of Assyria, another voice speaks both in sections of chapter 7 and elsewhere throughout the first forty chapters of the book. This voice is not that of the prophet, or of any prophet for that matter. Blank's theory is that the historical Isaiah died, having preached all his life of an Assyrian conquest of Jerusalem that never came. The narrow escape of 701 B.C.E. and the continuation of Davidic rule proved Isaiah to have been simply wrong as a predictor of events. Therefore, his students (the "disciples" mentioned in 8:16) created another Isaiah, a legendary figure who represented the polar opposite of the historical prophet's teachings. Where the Isaiah of history had heralded the end of the House of David, the Isaiah of legend predicted new glory for the dynasty; where the former foretold imminent national disaster, the latter confronted his people with assurances of Divine protection.[1]

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[1] The significance of Blank's discovery can best be appreciated by going to any other commentary on Isaiah 7 and following the distracted commentator as he tries to make sense out of the self-contradictory contents of the recieved text. As a case study in futility, we suggest the highly competent commentary of Otto Kaiser Isaiah 1-12 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1972), pp. 86-109.

The Immanuel oracle, now disentangled by Blank from the historical Isaiah's prophecy of destruction represents the essential position of the legendary Isaiah. The pregnant woman will give birth to a son who will be called "God-is-with-us." Although his birth is imminent, we are not told who he is. For that knowledge, we must turn to chapter 9:

> For to us a child is born,
> to us a son is given;
> and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
> and his name shall be called
> "A wonderful counselor is the mighty God,
> the eternal Father."
> A peaceful prince the growth of
> whose authority and peace will not cease,[1]
> upon the throne of David and over his kingdom,
> to establish it, and to uphold it
> with justice and righteousness
> from this time forth and for evermore.
> The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.
> (Is. 9:6-7)

The legendary Isaiah is expanding his oracle of chapter 7. There the child is still in the womb; here he has been born. He is the crown prince of Judah, son of Ahaz and the Queen, soon to rule as King Hezekiah.[2] Despite appearances to the contrary, this is no Messianic prophecy. To be sure, the subject of the proclamation is a king of Israel and, as such, a "messiah" or anointed one of God (according to Davidic theology). However, all we have here is a birth announcement expressed in the typical language of the court myth. All kings of Judah were spoken of in this way; each "proved" that God was "with" the House of David simply by being born to rule and continue the royal line. This proclamation is neither prophecy nor messianism.[1] It expresses precisely that official theology so abhorrent to the historical Isaiah and all the prophets. In their attempt to make his words accord with the realities of history (the survival of Jerusalem in 734 and 701 B.C.E. and the continued reign of the earthly king), Isaiah's seventh century "followers" created a legend which contradicted all the historical Isaiah had said.

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[1] This and the three previous lines contain our own translation of this much debated title. Von Rad, p. 172, makes much of the fact that the passage refers to a "prince" rather than a "king." This lesser title, he claims, expresses the prince's dependence on God, the true King. The court myth did, of course, make this claim. However, this is not to the point here. The subject of this passage is called "prince" simply because that is what he is, as his father, Ahaz, is still on the throne as king. At this point we break with Blank who does not see a direct connection between "Immanuel" and the "peaceful prince." He declines to speculate as to the former's identity and sees the latter as a post exilic Messiah figure.

[2] There is a problem of chronology here. Arguing from II Kings 16:2 and 18:2, Kaiser points out (p. 102) that Hezekiah was 16 years old at the time of the Immanuel prophecy so that neither it nor 9:6-7 could refer to him. Lindblom (pp. 368-69) supports the Hezekiah hypothesis simply by virtue of the logic of the passages and by dismissing the chronology in Kings as unreliable. We agree with Lindblom's conclusion but for a reason based on Blank's theory. These oracles are legendary utterances of an Isaiah who never lived. They are not subject to criticism based on historic chronology.

So we now have two Isaiahs. The first, a historical figure who had abhorred everything connected to the earthly monarchy, certainly expressed no hope for a Davidic future, messianic or otherwise. The second, a legendary construct of the following century simply spoke for the myth which had long upheld the historical kingdom, and when a sitting king is found adequate, a mythic Messiah is hardly necessary. But, is that all there is to these two Isaiahs? Or, does either of them harbor a future hope of the coming of the mythic Kingdom of God? The Isaiah of legend does not any more than did the other spokesmen for the Davidic theology. For all of them, the historical reality was adequate as long as they could continue to speak of it in mythic terms.

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[1] Many scholars disagree and consider this passage to be messianic. For the view that it is messianic, but not eschatological, see von Rad, p. 171. For the view that it is messianic and eschatological, see Bright, The Kingdom of God, p. 91. For the view that it is messianic and eschatological, but not written by Isaiah, see Blank, pp. 162-64.

But what of the historical Isaiah? Do all his oracles run to catastrophe, calamity, and utter destruction? Blank answers in the affirmative but, remarkably, never once accounts for or even mentions Isaiah 4 which we hold to be an oracle of the historical Isaiah.

> In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel. And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, every one who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy and a pavilion. It will be for a shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.
>
> (Is. 4:2-6)

Are these the words of the original Isaiah? Despite opinion to the contrary, there is no reason to doubt it. The topic is, after all, "the remnant," a new idea which Isaiah had mentioned in 1:9:

> If the Lord of hosts
>   had not left us a few survivors,
> we should have been like Sodom, . . .

The destruction was not to be total, although the historical reality of Judah as a political entity was to perish. What then would be left? We are told in another remnant passage in 6:13:

> "And though a tenth remain in it [the land],
>   it will be burned again,
> like a terebinth or an oak,
>   whose stump remains standing
>   when it is felled."
> The holy seed is its stump.

It would seem that the remnant is to be mythic rather than historic. The stump will be burned over once it is cut down. The earthly kingdom will be destroyed, the remnant of the people decimated a second time. What will remain is the "holy seed," the possibility of new life, holy life, mythic life. A life which has left all history behind and is lived in the eternal presence of God. That mythic existence of the remnant, only hinted at here, is what is described in 4:2-4. The "holy seed" of 6:13 has blossomed into the "branch of the Lord" (vs. 2). All the survivors of the death of the historical kingdom "will be called holy." The "burning" (vs. 4) is over, the sins of Jerusalem have been purged (vs. 4) and God Himself shall rule as He did in the age of Moses in "cloud by day . . . fire by night (vs. 5). This is Isaiah's ultimate vision of the mythic kingdom to come.

However, we have found no Messianic figure in this vision. Elsewhere in Isaiah such a figure does appear, most notably in chapter 11, but the terms of the first verse of that oracle ("there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse") reveal a positive attitude toward the royal line foreign to the historic Isaiah and an eschatological hope unknown to the seventh century Isaiah of legend. The prophecy must therefore be part of the ongoing post-exilic Isaiah legend, as are all other Messianic speculations in the book and need not concern us here.

Thus, the Isaiah of history, while no Messianist, speaks with the prophets before him in the name of the mythic Kingdom of God which will soon reveal its power in the destruction of the earthly-historical reality followed by the establishment of Divine rule over Israel.

Micah

Here again we have the problem of exilic and post-exilic insertions into the original collection of Micah oracles. But at least we have only one pre-exilic Micah, the late eighth century prophet who shared the anger but rejected the hope of the historic Isaiah.

The moral sin of the people is Micah's persistent concern and we need not read long to discover its source:

> What is the transgression of Jacob?
>   Is it not Samaria?
> And what is the sin of the house of Judah?
>   Is it not Jerusalem?
> (Mic. 1;5)

The conduct of the capital cities of the two kingdoms, perhaps the very idea of political centers established by political rulers, is the focus of the prophet's wrath.

> Hear this, you heads of the house of Jacob
>   and rulers of the house of Israel,
> who abhor justice
>   and pervert all equity,
> who build Zion with blood
>   and Jerusalem with wrong.
> (Mic. 3:9-10)

Could the prophet have in mind the slave labor used by Solomon and his successors to build his palace and Temple? Surely God has had nothing to do with all these sins of the House of David. In 6:4 the prophet makes clear, by omission, that the Lord did not send David to rule, as the court theology had claimed:

> For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,
>   and redeemed you from the house of bondage;
> and I sent before you Moses,
>   Aaron, and Miriam.

No mention, of course, of David. It is as if nothing has happened since the wilderness period. And, for the prophet, that is precisely true. Nothing meaningful has happened since Israel cut itself off from the living myth which had given it life, substituting human rule for Divine. The calamitous results of this folly are soon to come crashing down on the sinful nation:

> Therefore because of you [the rulers]
>   Zion shall be plowed as a field;
> Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins,
>   and the mountain of the house a wooded height.
> (Mic. 3:12)

And once the destruction begins and the people bewail their fate, the wrath of God changes to mocking reference to their futile trust in human leadership:

> Now why do you cry aloud?
>   Is there no king in you?
> Has your counselor perished, . . .
> (Mic. 4:9)

Could there be a more poignant statement of the exact cause of the people's suffering and the Lord's wrath? Here, the establishment of a human dynasty is seen as nothing short of idolatry. The punishment is death.

The Messianic passages found here and there throughout the received text are probably post-exilic. The lyrical Bethlehem prophecy ("But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, . . ." [5:2-4]) pre-supposes an exile of some duration already under way.[1] The "latter days" prophecy of chapter 4 uses the near-apocalyptic language of a later age and reveals a positive attitude toward the Temple which Micah never held.

All this leaves us with a depressing, but inescapable, picture of unalloyed doom. The people had been told their duties to their King:

> He has showed you, O man, what is good;
>   and what does the Lord require of you
> but to do justice, and to love kindness,
>   and to walk humbly with your God?
> (Mic. 6:8)

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[1] McKeating believes this passage to be pre-exilic (though not as early as eighth century and not Messianic). This view opens up some interesting possibilities, but since he does not choose to defend his position, we will simply reiterate our view that the historical situation presupposed here would seem to be exilic or post-exilic. See Henry McKeating, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 177.

In failing to fulfil these simple obligations, the historical kingdom whose very existence represented a refusal "to walk humbly" with God, doomed itself. The mythic Kingdom would affirm its authority not in a future golden age, but immediately in the total eclipse of the kingdom built by arrogant human hands.

Jeremiah

In the Book of Jeremiah, we have the largest collection of material from a single prophet to be found in the Bible. So much territory--historical, psychological and theological--is covered that we must be careful to address ourselves only to the specific issue of the Kingdom with which we are here concerned. We feel much like a man who enters the Louvre intent on viewing only the paintings of one specific gallery and on his way there passes through one room after another without a glance at the infinite riches they contain. But, this is unavoidable. Here, as in previous sections, our purpose is not a comprehensive review of the prophet's thought. We seek only those aspects of it which bear upon our subject.

There can be no doubt that Jeremiah stood in lifelong opposition to the earthly kingdom of the Davidic monarchy. That this opposition was to the institution itself rather than to specific kings is evident from the deafening silence of the prophet regarding the great Deuteronomic reform of King Josiah which commenced in 624 B.C.E., some five years after Jeremiah began his preaching career.[1] Josiah's purge of pagan influence (II Kings 22-23) seems to have impressed the prophet not at all. Here the human, historical realm had done as much as man could be expected to do in seeking a national return to God. Of course, the self-purgation was not complete. But, that is precisely the point. History can never negate its own partial and imperfect character by means of its own exertions. Its very attempt to perfect itself is final proof of the human arrogance which, to the mythic mind, reveals the bankruptcy of history's basic presuppositions. Nowhere in Jeremiah do we find a single positive reference to Josiah while he lived; nowhere do we find a word of sorrow that might indicate that the prophet joined in the national mourning for the good king who died so prematurely and so tragically (II Kings 23:29).[1] Josiah had been an earthly monarch and as such a usurper of Divine prerogatives. For this alone Jeremiah could not forgive him. What Josiah did could not make up for what he was. Only long after his death does the prophet at last make one positive reference to Josiah, and then, it is crucial to note, only to use the dead king as a means of attacking his son then on the throne (II Kings 22:15-16).[2]

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[1] Bright, The Kingdom of God, p. 107n., disputes this, finding it "incredible" that Jeremiah could have been silent regarding the reform. To support his view, Bright arbitrarily re-dates several of the prophet's oracles to the reform period. Bright's disbelief on this point is probably due to his overall failure to appreciate fully the radical nature of prophetic thought.

The demands of the prophet were absolute and thus ever beyond the ability of historic reality to achieve them.

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[1] We agree with the view that there is no reason to suppose that the account of Jeremiah's lament for Josiah in II Chronicles 35:25 is historic. This is another curious example of a legend associated with an historic prophet which (as we saw in the similar case of Isaiah) contradicts the actions and attitudes of the man himself. This view is supported by H. Cundiffe-Jones, Jeremiah, God in History (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1972), p. 37.

[2] Bright, The Kingdom of God, p. 106, disagrees. He points to this verse as evidence of Jeremiah's ongoing admiration for Josiah as "well nigh the ideal king."

> For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem:
> "Break up your fallow ground,
> and sow not among thorns.
> Circumcise yourselves to the Lord,
> remove the foreskin of your hearts, . . .
> (Jer. 4:3-4)

Reform was a mere "sowing among thorns." What was needed was "new ground," a new beginning--a beginning that would mean an end of the historic kingdom. What Assyria was, now Babylon is: the rod of the Lord's anger. Chapter 5 tells the tale:

> "Behold, I am bringing upon you
> a nation from afar, O house of Israel,
> says the Lord.
> (Jer. 5:15)
> They shall eat up your harvest and your food;
> they shall eat up your sons and your daughters;
> they shall eat up your flocks and your herds;
> they shall eat up your vines and your fig trees;
> your fortified cities in which you trust
> they shall destroy with the sword."
> (Jer. 5:17)

The specific threats of destruction leveled at the kings of Judah are terrifying, all the more so because the last of that line had himself called upon Jeremiah for a word of comfort. In response to Zedekiah's pious entreaty, the prophet proclaims: ". . . if you do not surrender to the princes of the king of Babylon, then this city shall be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and you shall not escape from their hand" (Jer. 38:18).

Jeremiah was offering the king his life at the cost of his throne. If he did not surrender, he would lose both. Either way, the kingdom was doomed. Jeremiah's incarceration for treason (38:6) against the state was well-deserved from the politico-historical point of view of that state (and every state); from the mythic perspective of the prophet, it was no more that was to be expected from a bankrupt earthly reality.

But while Jeremiah demanded and expected the total destruction of the Judean kingdom, he never predicted an end for the people, who, once the state was removed, might come to understand themselves as subjects of the Kingdom of God.[1] "'But even in those days, says the Lord, I will not make a full end of you. . . .'" (Jer. 5:18). Jeremiah expands the remnant idea developed by Isaiah into a major element of his message. The kingdom would end, but a new reality would emerge.

> So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.
>
> Then the word of the Lord came to me: "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? says the Lord.
>
> (Jer. 18:3-5a)

Where human reformation had failed, Divine re-creation might succeed. Here we see the mythic model of heteronomous man, totally dependent on God's power to re-make him as He sees fit. All initiative comes from God, human efforts having come to nothing. The destruction of the historic vessel of the Israelite state is a necessary prelude to the creation of a new people who know themselves to be God's own.

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[1] Quite a few Biblical scholars of the recent past have doubted the authenticity of the positive, hopeful passages in Jeremiah. Some of them are indeed later insertions (e.g., 31:7-14, 23-25, 27f. and 33:10-13) but most are not. The argument against the possibility of any hopeful passages being authentic is the usual circular one: "Jeremiah is a gloomy prophet, therefore he could not have written anything non-gloomy, which, of course, proves just how gloomy he was."

Against those who hold the positive prophecies to be, one and all, later insertions we would reply that, 1) his original call "to build and to plant" as well as "to destroy and to overthrow"(1:10) should have prepared us from the beginning for a double-edged message, 2) the first deportation to Babylon presented him for the first time with a Jewish community totally severed from the hated Jerusalem monarchy and thus worthy of the prophet's hopes, and 3) the fall of Jerusalem itself, seen as the punishment of God, having happened, the way was now open as of 586 B.C.E. for reconciliation between Israel and its Divine King. And so Jeremiah's message which begins in deep gloom ends with the lofty expectation of renewal and rebirth.

If there is hope of renewal it lies with the exiles in Babylon, those no longer subject to the historical state. The prophet's letter in chapter 29 addresses these exiles: "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (29:11).

God is with them, not despite their exile but because of it. In mythic terms, it is those still in Judah who are the exiles--exiles from God and His Kingdom; those in Babylon can now come home to their God: "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you" (29:12).

To be a Jew is for Jeremiah to be a subject of God's Kingdom, wherever on earth one might happen to live.[1] If life in Judah is preferable at all, it is only because here, under ideal conditions, the Jew might be free to live under God without external hindrance. Thus the concluding promise of the return to a land purified of history with all its pretensions and imperfections. Purified and renewed, not by man but by the only active agent in the mythic universe, God Himself.

> There is hope for your future,
> says the Lord,
> and your children shall come back to their own country.
> (Jer. 31:17)

Ultimately that future hope will be realized in a new covenant:

> "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which

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[1] The Babylonian experience was to be the crucial "dress rehearsal" for the two millennia long exile to come during which the inner spiritual life of Judaism flourished in a mythic framework largely outside of history.

> they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."
>
> (Jer. 31:31-34)

This covenant will, if anything, be even more thoroughly mythological than the one sealed at Sinai.[1] The Law will be internalized; it will be one with the people's will. Or better, the people's will will be dissolved into the Law so that disobedience will no longer be possible, all human autonomy having disappeared. This myth involves the total negation of human initiative and human freedom in the sense of free choice between opposing possibilities. Here there is only one possibility, that of "knowing" the Lord and serving Him.[2] This concept of the Kingdom in which all external Law is superfluous, is unique in the Hebrew scriptures. We will not meet with it again until Paul develops his conception of the new creation in Christ, and even then, the apostle leaves room for human rebellion and backsliding.[1] But in Jeremiah's new covenant, the rule of God is absolute because His Kingdom is built in the hearts of men.[2]

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[1] We take the phrase "Behold the days are coming" to be an eschatological formula referring to "the last days" rather than days soon to come. Compare with Amos 9:13. Cunliffe-Jones agrees (p. 197).

[2] This deterministic aspect of the "new covenant" passage leads Blank to doubt its originality with Jeremiah. He holds it to be out of keeping with the free-will theme that runs through the rest of the book. He has other arguments, all interesting (as usual) regarding this point. However, in terms of the dialectic we have posited in this study, it makes perfect sense for free-will as the exercise of human autonomy to cease once the perfect mythic state is achieved. This is, in fact, a necessary aspect of mythic existence as we have defined it. For his views on this, see Sheldon Blank, Jeremiah, Man and Prophet (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1961), pp. 208-13.

After this, all else would seem superfluous. But there is more. Jeremiah proves to be the originator of true messianism for whom we have been searching.[3]

> "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as King and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'"
>
> (Jer. 23:5-6)

Again the eschatological opening phrase is seen. In this latter-day myth, the idealized king, the Messiah will play a double role, representing both the righteousness of God and that of the people.[4]

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[1] See II Corinthians 1:20 and 5:17. The "new covenant" is never again mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures. Post-exilic thought saw the original covenant as unbreakable (Is. 40:8). It is interesting to note that the "new covenant" model was adopted by two deviant Jewish sects, the Essenes and the Christian, who were as uncompromising and mythic in their world-views as Jeremiah himself. See William Holladay, Jeremiah, Spokesman Out of Time (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1974), pp. 118-21.

[2] We are reminded of Gerard Manley Hopkins' evocative term for man's internal environment, the "inscape." In Jeremiah's vision, the inscape is the landscape of God's true Kingdom.

[3] There is some dispute as to the authenticity of the following passage. This is the only messianic reference in Jeremiah which may be pre-exilic. Among the doubters are Bright, A History of Israel, p. 353; E. W. Nicholson, Jeremiah, Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 172; Blank, Jeremiah, pp. 243-44; Noth and Holladay who pass over these verses in silence. Lindblom, p. 374, von Rad, 2:218, and Cunliffe-Jones, p. 157-58, among others, consider this passage to be an authentic, original expression of Jeremiah's Messianic hope. We agree.

[4] This dual function of the king as representative of both the Divine and the human is, of course, a standard feature of sacral kingship. The Babylonian New Year Festival comes to mind in which the king performed as a god and as a man on different days of the cosmic drama. See Religions of the Ancient Near East, ed. Isaac Mendelsohn (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955), pp. 129-39.

As in the "new covenant" vision, the two have actually become one as they can only in a mythic context. The Messiah figure here described is named for that righteousness which is the point of contact between God and man, which is, in fact, the Kingdom in which God and man live together as Monarch and vassal. The name itself denies autonomy first to the king ("our" righteousness [that of the collectivity--the people], not "my" righteousness) and then to the people (their righteousness is not properly their own, but is of God).[1] In this first Biblical appearance then, the Messiah personifies the Kingdom itself metaphorically uniting in his person the Ruler and the ruled so as to express the mythic thought that the human and Divine realms are ultimately one.

Thus, the age of pre-exilic prophecy comes to a close with the vision of a golden age to come, a mythic Kingdom founded on a new covenant and personified by a messianic figure appropriated from Davidic theology and henceforth to be a major element in all Jewish eschatological myth.

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[1] The last Judean king, Zedekiah (meaning "the Lord is my righteousness") is being alluded to here. The shift in the Messianic name from the singular "my" to the collective "our" (a reference to the people of Israel) represents Jeremiah's disgust with the arrogance of the historical monarchy and his implied rejection of the entire institution. The Messianic kingship is the alternative to, not the fulfilment of, the Jerusalem political establishment. The choice of the name Zedkaynu for the Messiah which is a deliberate play on, and mocking of, the name of Jeremiah's arch antagonist Zedekiah is major evidence that this passage is a genuine Jeremiah prophecy.

3. Characteristics of the Prophets' Mythic Kingdom

It has become dogma among Bible critics to speak of the prophets' opening or reopening the realm of history as locus of Divine activity. History, it has been said (and said), or, rather, "sacred history" is the key conception of Israelite faith. This view is not false. It is misleading as only a partial truth can be misleading. It is certainly correct that the earliest Israelite theology had within it a dynamic which can be called historic in that it expressed itself in once-for-all events which were seen as God's mighty acts. But the very essence of these acts was their purposiveness. And what was their purpose? The answer to this question must necessarily carry us beyond history, even sacred history. The end toward which the mighty acts pointed was thoroughly mythological. Israel would be established in her land which was God's land and history would cease. No further development was foreseen. The daily activities of life would continue, but unnoticed. The people would not cease to exist in the world, but that world would be experienced anew as what it always was: the Kingdom of God.

The immediacy and totality of God's presence was of a mythic dimension. Had not this already been foreshadowed in His free manipulation of both nature and history at the Reed Sea? His promises to His people also spoke of His encompassing control of nature and history. The fruits of the earth in their season, and victory in battle in its time. In the days of Joshua the latter was most prized; following the conquest, the former rose to a position of central importance. But the original myth which brought Israel out of Egypt already combined history and nature as its principal elements while transcending them both. In upsetting the natural and historic situations in Egypt (the visitation by plagues and the liberation of the slaves) the invisible mythic King who confronted the historic Pharaoh made all things new. This newness, this Divine creativity expressed itself historically, but its end was beyond history and was realized in the mythic status of the post-conquest Amphictyonic theology.

All of this is repeated and renewed in the words of the prophets. Certainly they proclaimed God's lordship over history in the face of the human claims of the monarchy. But the history ruled by God is more than history. Its non-historical end is always in view.

For the monarchy, despite the mythical language in which it liked to cloak its human purposes, both events and their ends were historical. For the prophets, events are sacred-historical but their end is the end of all history in the dynamic sense of "making new." Once Israel has been renewed, the work is done, the events of history have been completed and have ceased. The mythic Kingdom has been attained. This fulfilment is the mythic reason for God's entrance into history to begin with. The final visions of the prophets allow no room for change or alteration; even the cyclical movement of the nature myths is excluded. This is not improved or even perfected history. This is a world in which history is no more. God has entered history so as to do away with it after using it for His mythical purposes. The absence of institutional structures which had been a reality for the Amphictyony was adopted by the prophets and combined in their vision with an analogous absence of inner conflict and doubt. The redeemed community would express the perfect faithfulness, and wholeheartedness that had eluded even Abraham and Moses. Such a denial of psychological and historical conflict is essential to the mythic vision of the prophets. If the prophets stressed God's action in history, it was because the historical monarchy had sought to exclude Him from it, not because history was God's final word. The prophetic message was of God's mythological totality--His control of history as well as everything else--not of His historicity. We are led to conclude, then, that the prophets were spokesmen for an absolutist mythical conception of the Kingdom of God in the name of which they attacked and sought the destruction of all earthly-historical attempts to establish such a kingdom in the midst of the realities of human existence.

The destruction of the Judean state by the armies of Babylonia came as a cataclysmic fulfilment and ultimate vindication of the prophetic faith. The earthly-historical kingdom had been swept away; only the mythic Kingdom remained. The Jew had no choice if he wished to remain a Jew; he had to adopt the prophets' mythic vision as definitive of his personal and group identity or disappear along with the socio-political structures which had long defined him.

In Babylon Jewry reconstituted itself as a community maintained solely by an all embracing royal myth in which God alone is King and Israel is His people. Prepared by the prophets, and having witnessed the irresistable power of God to bring low the pretensions of men, the people made of the historical exile a mythic homecoming.

II. THE LATE BIBLICAL PERIOD

A. Maintaining the Myth

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Israelite self-understanding had from its very beginnings moved, in a dialectical pattern between the opposite poles of myth and history. The Mosaic myth, originally unique in its assimilation of the dynamism usually associated with historical consciousness gave way in the Amphyictionic period to a thoroughgoing mythological self-conception expressing itself in a realized eschatology in which all had been accomplished by the establishment of the tribes in the Promised Land. The people of God, ruled directly by their mythic King, had achieved what must have seemed to be a permanent rest from historical struggle and development. And so it was for nearly two centuries. Eventually, however, the external historical forces in the midst of which the tribes had dwelt, and over which they had no control, broke in on this enclave of mythic rest and forced Israel to defend itself by adopting historical means. The resulting earthly-historical monarchy proved fatal to the mythic Kingdom which it had been instituted to protect. While defeating the external historical enemy, the monarchy established for the first time a politico-historical definition of Israelite existence alien to the native tradition. Henceforward, history ate away at the myth from within, achieving what Philistines and Canaanites had failed to achieve: the replacement of the mythic Kingdom of God with the historical kingdom of man.

In such circumstances it was inevitable that the myth would launch a counter-attack and seek to reestablish its dominance over the consciousness of Israel. The thought of the prophets represented that ongoing struggle to renew the ancient awareness of the immediate rule of God over His subjects. We have reviewed the outstanding expressions of that prophetic polemic and have sensed its power. However, it is doubtful that that power would have been sufficient to topple the earthly edifice erected by the historical kingdom had not external events intervened decisively in the affairs of Israel. Once again, the pendulum of Israelite self-understanding swung in response to historical pressures from without. The conquest of Judah by the armies of Babylon raised the anti-historical polemic of the prophets from the level of a minority view championed by isolated and eccentric nay-sayers to that of prophecy vindicated and fulfilled by actual events. There could be no doubt in the minds of the Jews who lived through the cataclysmic events of 586 B.C.E. that the mythic theology of the prophets was correct and the historical claims of the Davidic monarchy bankrupt. It was, then, upon this new understanding of Israelite existence that the people proceeded to re-establish and reform their national life both in spite of and because of the exile.

1. Mythic Life in the Exile

The Babylonian conquest and exile proved to be one of the great shaping events of Israelite experience.[1] Isaiah's fearsome prophecy, uttered in another context, was now understood to have been fulfilled:

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[1] Noth states that the destruction of 587 B.C.E. "did not signify in any way a sudden change in the historical situation for Israel," and then goes on to remark that, despite this, "Israel regarded this event as a great and decisive turning-point in its history" (p. 289). If the first of these statements is to stand, then the second must have reference to a rather perverse Israelite decision to view an unimportant event as somehow crucial. Such strained separation of historical and psychological realities is typical of Noth who often takes great

> . . . cities lie waste without inhabitant,
> and houses without men, and the land is utterly desolate,
> and the Lord removes men far away,
> and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.
> And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again,
> like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains standing when it
> is felled."
>
> (Isa. 6:11-13)

What Isaiah had expected from Assyria came a century and a half later from Babylon. It is estimated that Judah's population, which probably exceeded 250,000 in the eighth century, was cut in half by the deportation of 597 and was little more than 20,000 even after the first return of the exiles in 538.[1] These figures are drastic indeed. Isaiah's prediction of a more than ninety percent reduction of population was borne out. In 597 and 586 Judah had been burned and burned again and it would be folly to underestimate the shock, the despair which must have swept over the people. For more than four centuries they had been taught to define themselves in earthly-historical terms. Nathan's assurance that the Davidic house would rule forever had become the cornerstone of the Jerusalem court theology, which had, in turn, become the new national faith. The splendid palaces and shrines of Solomonic Jerusalem surmounted by the Temple erected in the royal precincts stood

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pleasure in pointing out what he views as the inappropriateness of Jewish interpretations of events to the events themselves. One is led to suspect that what annoys Noth most in this stubborn Jewish insistence on singular interpretations of historic events, is that this is precisely what has enabled Jewry to survive calamities that would have destroyed--and did destroy--other peoples.

[1] Bright, History, p. 324. There is a fundamental clash between Bright and Noth over the location of the center of Israelite life during the Babylonian period. The latter's statement that "the tribes left behind in the old country continued to the be centre of Israelite history" (Noth, p. 292) is presented without defense or evidence and must be rejected in favor of Bright's more widely accepted view that "though Israelites in Palestine were still the numerical majority, Israel's future scarcely lay with them" (Bright, History, p. 325).

as visual evidence of Divine approval of the new political dispensation. And if the Divine King Who bestowed that approval seemed more distant than formerly--shut up as He now was in the "deep darkness" of His Temple--the earthly king was ever visible and active to dispel all doubts as to the legitimacy of his reign.

Now all that was gone. Every visible symbol of the earthly monarchy had vanished.[1] The splendor of Jerusalem had been swept away, the city itself burned to the ground, its population carried into exile. And the Temple with its sacred Ark--the ultimate sign of God's favor toward the political structures of the nation--had itself fallen before the Babylonian hordes. This last--perhaps the greatest blow of all--was final evidence that the God Who had become the Divine Guarantor of Davidic rule was no more. The conclusion was unavoidable that the historical kingdom--all it had been and all it had meant--was a thing of the past.

But that historical kingdom had been what Israel was for four centuries and more. The land, the nation, the political structures had been definitive of Israelite existence for twenty generations. Well could the Israelites on their forlorn journey into exile lament:

> By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept,
> when we remembered Zion. . . .
> How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?
> (Ps. 137:1, 4)

Upon the answer to this question hung the future of Israel and indeed, of all Western religion as we know it. The historical kingdom was no more. Had Israel confined itself to mourning its loss and thus perpetuating its self-identification with a dead past, it would soon have ceased to exist. But Israel did not disappear with the symbols of its historical self-definition. Israel remembered something--something out of its earlier past that would turn the future from threat to promise. Jeremiah had said it in speaking God's words to His erring people:

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[1] Of course, Jehoiachin of the Davidic line still lived and was eventually accorded modest honors at the Babylonian court (2 Kings 25: 27-30). But no hope seems to have been focused on him for a national restoration, thus revealing the depths to which the Davidic theology had sunk in popular estimation. Noth disagrees, p. 290.

> Thus says the Lord:
> "Stand by the roads, and look
>   and ask for the ancient paths,
> where the good way is; and walk in it,
>   and find rest for your souls. . . ."
> (Jer. 6:16)

In the midst of the glories of the Davidic kingdom, the prophet had called the people back to an older, more enduring truth, an earlier ideal age. To Jeremiah's hearers now in exile the specific age to which the prophet had reference was clear enough.

> ". . . Thus says the Lord,
> I remember the devotion of your youth,
>   your love as a bride,
> how you followed me in the wilderness,
>   in a land not sown.
> Israel was holy to the Lord,
>   the first fruits of his harvest. . . ."
> (Jer. 2:2-3)

The prophet--and through him, God Himself--was calling Israel back to the wilderness, back to the time of its youth, a time before king or priest, palace or Temple--a mythic time in which God had been all in all. The task facing the exiles gradually began to define itself; it was nothing less than the re-construction of the mythic Kingdom on the ruins of the immediate historic past.

Conditions in Babylon were ideally suited for this great liferenewing endeavor.[1] Among the exiles was the elite of Jewry. The intellectual leaders, the craftsmen and businessmen, the nobility and the priesthood. Here in a foreign land the divisions which had on native soil set one group against another were forgotten. Various segments of the exiled population played a part in the reconstruction of the national life. Such was made possible, ironically enough, by the policy of the conquerers which differed so radically from that of the Assyrian destroyers of Northern Israel who had, a century and a half earlier, put a decisive end to the life of the ten northern tribes. The Babylonians did not disperse the people throughout their vast empire, but placed them in settlements in southern Mesopotamia in a group detention of sorts which permitted the captives to develop their own internal communal life.[2] This new life could in no way be political. The control over that aspect of existence was firmly in the hands of the Babylonians. The path of Israelite self-development was thus made clear both by Jewish inclination and Babylonian requirement. With history in the hands of the conqueror, myth alone was available as the new/old vector of Israel's self-understanding. But, far from feeling limited by this category of thought, the Jews, having seen the ruinous end of historical pretensions, found in myth a fertile and open field for national renewal.

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[1] The absence of detailed information regarding this period has forced scholars to resort to hypothetical reconstructions of exilic life. For one such attempt, see Peter R. Ackroyd, _Israel Under Babylon and Persia_ (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 1-59.

[2] It is also important to note that, unlike the Assyrians who had moved a foreign population (or at least, leadership class) into northern Israel following the dispersion of the ten tribes, the Babylonians did not introduce an alien population into Judah. It was, thus, possible for some exiles to return home following 538 B.C.E. and reestablish roots in a land which still had room for them.

The historical records of Israel's life in Babylon are non-existent--and for one very good reason. Israel had ceased to exist in history. Its existence became a rich and abundant inner life in which the community renewed its strength by rethinking the terms of its own self-definition. The absence of historical data during this period does not, of course, mean that there was a lack of creative activity. On the contrary, the Babylonian exile saw the production of some of the most significant literary works of the Jewish people--all aimed at the same goal: the reconstitution of the pre-Davidic mythic consciousness of Israel.

The Deuteronomistic Writer

Among these exilic literary efforts is the work of the late Deteronomic or "Deuteronomistic" writer whose anti-monarchic additions to the earlier Deuteronomic material reveal a deep antipathy to man-made history itself.[1] His intention throughout is to free the Divine King from all necessary connection to earthly institutions and historical requirements. He modifies the Jerusalem court theology of king and Temple and opens the way for an exilic ratification of the great insights of Jeremiah and the other prophetic opponents of the earthly-historical kingdom. We cannot here rehearse this writer's entire work; a glance at one chapter in which he edits and reworks the meaning of Davidic-Solomonic thought will suffice.

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[1] The question of the growth of the Deuteronomic history found in the Bible in the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings is a complex one. What we probably have in these books is a core of old traditions, folk tales, and early histories (often composed soon after the events they describe) edited and combined into more or less continuous narratives by the Deuteronomic historians of the late monarchic period. Following the fall of Jerusalem, additional "Deuteronomistic" writers added still more material to the corpus, usually in the form of qualifications placed on earlier theological certainties. Although some (Noth, p. 292) consider that the Deuteronomistic history was completed in Palestine, we would choose a Babylonian setting for it, probably during the early years of the exile, simply because it seems to speak so clearly to the needs of the people of that time and place.

For a detailed analysis of the various strands of material in one section of the Deuteronomic history, see Robert G. Boling, Judges (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc.), pp. 3-42.

Chapter eight of the first book of Kings contains the account of Solomon's dedication of the Temple of Jerusalem--the ultimate act of the historical monarchy in which the mythic King became a resident (and, in a deeper sense, a captive) of the earthly king's royal precincts.

> Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes . . . in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord . . . Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the Lord to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim.
> (I Kings 8:1, 6)

This description of the great procession into the Temple was written during the monarchic period, as is clearly indicated by verse 8 which tells us, in regard to the cherubim, that "they are there to this day." Thus the portable throne of the King Who had been with His people during all their wanderings came to rest in a building erected in the courtyard of Solomon's palace. One might observe that that the Ark was less under the wings of the cherubim than under the shadow of the political power of the earthly monarchy.

> Then Solomon said,
> "The Lord has set the sun in the heavens,
> but has said that he would dwell in thick darkness.
> I have built thee an exalted house,
> a place for thee to dwell in for ever."
> (I Kings 8:12-13)

These are in all probability the actual words of the king delivered at the dedication ceremony itself. And there can be no question but that he meant precisely what he said. The Lord was actually "to dwell in" this house "for ever," permanently tied to a specific location and, more importantly, to a specific political order. History had co-opted myth; the God Who had built David's house now had a house built for Him by man--a house in which He was obliged to dwell.

It is the remaining fifty verses of the chapter that display the heavy hands of several generations of Deuteronomic editors who are concerned with freeing Israel's true King from entrapment by the earthly pretender. Bear in mind that when the last of these additions were made the historical monarchy had ceased to exist; the overriding imperative was to see that the mythic Kingdom did not perish with it. From verse 14 through verse 26 an early Deuteronomic editor inserts one word over and over again as a gloss on Solomon's prayer of dedication. Five times he adds the word "name" so that it is the Lord's 'name', not the Lord Himself, that is in the sanctuary. In this vital distinction between the Temple as a literal dwelling place of the Lord and the Temple as "a house that my name might be there" (8:16) we can detect an editorial effort to disentangle the myth from its historical captivity within the political framework of the monarchy. Immediately following these verses are the later additions of the exilic Deuteronomistic writer who continues his predecessor's work:

> But will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!
>
> (I Kings 8:27)

Here Solomon seems to be arguing with his own prior words. But, of course, this last statement is not Solomon's at all, but an editorial addition by the exilic redactor who was expressing his profound rejection of the entire Davidic-Solomonic theology. He could not attack it outright and so he simply re-wrote it, appending to Solomon's original prayer a postscript which changed its meaning entirely. His ultimate solution to the problem of the now destroyed Temple is a neat one.

> And harken thou to the supplication of thy servant and of thy people Israel, when they pray toward this place; yea, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place; and when thou hearest, forgive.
>
> (I Kings 8:30)

Thus, the problem is solved. The Lord never actually lived in the Temple; He placed "His name" there, but maintained His true "dwelling place" in heaven (or beyond [v. 27]) whence He had looked toward the house built by Solomon. Now that the house was no more, and Israel dwelled in a foreign land, the people, still praying daily "toward this place" (the ruined site of the Temple) might still expect that their God would hear them and forgive the sins that led to the exile.

Here we have the essence of the exilic re-writing of Israel's story. This chapter presents the typical problem of the identification of God with the vanished symbols of the earthly kingdom--together with the typical solution adopted by the exilic writers in their remarkable response to the pressing need to reconstruct a nation's faith. Herein lies the brilliance and creative vitality of exilic thought and the proof of the unique resiliency of Israelite myth.

The work of the Deuteronomistic writer of the exile expressed the essential insight that Israelite religious existence need not be confined to the land of Israel. The people could "sing the Lord's song in a foreign land." In order to hammer this point home to his community, the writer was willing to edit the traditions of the Davidic-Solomonic theology so drastically as to completely alter the meaning of Solomon's words. He was not prepared to sweep away entirely four centuries of Jerusalem tradition but he did recast them so that the holy city, no longer a dwelling place, became a point of contact between Israel's people in exile and Israel's God in Heaven.

The faithful would pray toward the "place" where the Temple had stood and God would hear and forgive. This wirter displayed tremendous courage in recasting ancient traditions in a new mold united to the needs of his day. He has earned a place among the great religious reformers of history. He was, however, part of the Deuteronomic school of thought and, as such, could not imagine a relationship between Israel and Israel's God which would not require at least the ruined site of the Jerusalem sanctuary as touchstone. It was left to Ezekiel, the prophet of the early exile to image forth a human/Divine relationship more immediate than this--one in which God might actually be present in Babylon among His people without need for a third element--the Temple--as mediator between them. The result was to be a myth reminiscent in its purity of that of the Mosaic period.

Ezekiel

The mythic re-writing of the historical theology of David and Solomon is exemplified in the exilic book of Ezekiel. Here there is a double focus: an attempt to detach the mythic King from the institutions of the earthly monarchy, similar to that of the exilic Deuteronomistic writer, together with a blueprint for a mythic future for Israel reminiscent of the visions of the earlier prophets.

Two facts must be borne in mind in evaluating the work of Ezekiel as it affects our concerns in this study. First of all, the time element is crucial. This prophet of the early exile was carried to

Babylon in the first deportation in 597 B.C.E.,[1] which means that much of his writing was done before the destruction of Jerusalem a decade later. Seeing that the historic cataclism was near at hand, Ezekiel worked frantically to establish in the minds of the exiles a separation between the historic and mythic realities. Following the destruction he labored with equal vigor to maintain the mythic hope in the absence of all historic verification. Secondly, we must remember that Ezekiel was a priest (Ezek. 1:3),[2] the first prophet since the historic Isaiah to belong to that hereditary religious aristocracy. His concerns naturally centered on the Temple--the historical Temple soon to be destroyed and the mythic Temple of his imagination. Ezekiel's first and most famous vision reveals his pre-occupation with one element of the Temple--the central element: the Holy Ark, the symbol of God's Divine Kingship. In regard to the Ark, one might say that Ezekiel's major concern was to undo the work of Solomon, that is, to remove the sacred throne of the Lord from the place to which the great king had consigned it.

> In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.
>
> (Ezek. 1:1)

There follows one of the most glorious visions of the Western religious imagination; the familiar account of clouds, flashing fire, the four living creatures, the wheels within wheels "full of eyes," the crystal firmament above them and above that the sapphire throne itself upon which was seated "a likeness as it were of a human form," of fire and bronze surrounded by a brightness "like the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, . . ." (Ezek. 1:4-28; passim).

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[1] For some reason, Noth (p. 287) holds that Ezekiel was deported in the exile of 586 rather than in that of 597 B.C.E. It is difficult to imagine why he would think so. One can deal with Ezekiel, dwelling in Babylon, being imaginatively transported to Jerusalem. However it is really too much to picture the prophet, still in Jerusalem, imagining himself in Babylon imagining himself in Jerusalem!

[2] This convergence of priestly and prophetic concerns in exile reveals the extent to which adversity can unite previously hostile parties. This was certainly the case in Babylon.

> Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard the voice of one speaking.
>
> (Ezek. 1:28)

What the Lord is about to speak, that He will announce first the destruction and then the restoration of Zion, is no more important than that He is there at all. For this is God's first appearance outside the borders of Israel since the Mosaic period,[1] and His first outside the Temple confines in more than four hundred years. What Ezekiel saw was the Ark itself, made mobile once again, freed from its housing in Jerusalem--freed to be among God's people in exile. It would be impossible to overstate the crucial importance of this vision. In it we have the ultimate image of the indestructability of Israel's mythic faith. Every detail is heavy with precisely the message so desperately needed by the captives in Babylon. The two cherubim of the Temple have become the four-faced "living creatures" bearing the throne chariot. The proper mythic relationship has been re-established. No longer do the angels overshadow the Ark; they carry it, with the Lord above their wings, overshadowing them. No longer are they golden images of human manufacture; they have been given life by the "spirit" which directs their flight. Their four faces and the wheels full of eyes can represent only the eternal vigilance of God watching over His people wherever they may be. The rainbow speaks of God's covenant--eternal, unbreakable, still in force; as it was at the flood so it is now in the exile. God is not in the Temple but is wherever His people are--for where they are, there is His Kingdom.

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[1] Kaufmann makes much of the parallels between Ezekiel and Moses. "He feels himself almost the equal of Moses in prophecy; alone of all the prophets after Moses, he is lawgiver; none but Moses and Ezekiel see visions of the sanctuary of the future" (p. 436).

But even here Ezekiel is careful not to say too much. The historical theology had sought to reduce God to the role of guarantor of the monarchy, confined within the Temple walls. The prophet is aware of the danger of freeing God from Davidic-Solomonic reductionism only to over-define Him once again as an exclusive possession of the exilic community. And so the Ark remains moveable; God Who frees His people, Himself remains free. Nowhere is Ezekiel's theological sophistication more evident than in his insistence that he has seen, not the totality of the Divinity, but only "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord." It is no accident that this vision claims to have penetrated only to a point at three removes from the essence of God.[1] In that what he sees is an image, it is perforce human, since the Biblical image of God is always man. The prophet will not attempt to exhaust and thus impoverish the Divine reality as had the historical theology. He is content to liberate God from all limitations of Davidic thought so that He can dwell with His people once again and they with Him.

All of the classic themes of Israelite myth are present in

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[1] Once again, one is reminded of Moses who saw the "back" of God, rather than His "face" (Ex. 33:20-23). Like Ezekiel's vision, a human image; and like Ezekiel's visions, experienced in such a way as to preserve the hiddenness of the Divine essence.

Ezekiel. According to the prophet, Israel's troubles are due to its refusal to acknowledge God's Divine Kingship. But if the nation rebelled against Him in happier, former times, now in the day of His wrath, His rule will be demonstrated with inescapable power.

> "As I live, says the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, I will be king over you. . . ."
>
> (Ezek. 20:33)

The symbols are from the exodus tradition;[1] the message is that the outstretched arm and mighty hand that once delivered can also destroy--the wrath directed against Egypt can be loosed upon Israel as well.

The constant refrain that Israel is "a rebellious house" re-enforces the mythic theme of the evils of attempted human autonomy--a theme which Ezekiel carries farther than did his prophetic forerunners by stating that the repentance which will follow the destruction will itself be the doing of God rather than a free act of men. Where Jeremiah had envisioned the "new covenant" as a gift of God in response to His children's repentance. Ezekiel condemns Israel in every generation and sees no hope of a change of heart as a result of human efforts. In unadulterated mythic fashion, all initiative will issue from God.

> I will take you from the nations, . . . I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean . . . A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes . . .
>
> (Ezek. 36:24-27)

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[1] At this point, one is forced to conclude that Ezekiel's borrowing of Mosaic metaphors is as deliberate as the Priestly decision to cut off the Torah narrative at the death of Moses. In both cases, the concentration on the great lawgiver expresses a rejection of the later monarchic theology as well as heralding the birth of a new legally based Judaism.

Here human heteronomy is complete; man's reliance on God, total. Man can rebel of his own free will, but cannot return to God by his own efforts. One can only conclude from this formulation that for Ezekiel, what man does on his own is evil; what God does to, for, and through him is good.[1] The evil then is not in what man does but in that he does anything at all. Ezekiel's ideal mythic image is of an Israel guided and led in every particular of life by "the spirit" which exercises absolute control. That such a state of affairs has never and can never exist in actual human life goes without saying. And so Ezekiel's visions of the future are not to be taken as a call to action (as has sometimes been thought),[2] but rather as a repudiation of all action as smacking of man's pretensions to autonomy. It is as a mythic flight of imagination rather than a historical program of restoration that Ezekiel's final visions of the renewed community must be read.

> But you, O mountain of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel; for they will soon come home.
>
> (Ezek. 36:8)

This prophecy at first seems to be a practical, realizable program for a return of the exiles. But one need only read a bit further to discover the mythic nature of what is being described. The crops will never fail (36:30), the land will be like the primeval Eden

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[1] It would be more exact to say that the prophet sees all of God's actions as JUST. In that they cause pain for the Lord and His people by destroying that which both of them love, God's judgments can hardly be termed "good" in the usual sense. But the higher good of justice is always the purpose of Divine action, whether issuing in deeds which seem "good" or "evil" to man.

[2] Von Rad (p. 234) seems at times to take Ezekiel's prophecies quite literally as some kind of political program. We agree with Kaufmann (p. 443) in rejecting this reading of the prophet's visions.

(36:35), Judah and Israel (the latter population no longer historically existant) will be united as one nation once again (37:21-22), etc., etc. Furthermore, once Israel is re-established in its land "in the latter years" the great apocalyptic enemy, "Gog of the land of Magog" (38:2), will bestir himself and do battle against God's people. However, even in this dire emergency, the people themselves will do nothing; God will act for them, or rather for HImself, for Ezekiel's God has only one motivation for all of His actions--to "vindicate my holiness before your eyes" (38:16). God Himself, using methods which can only be described as magical will destroy the mythic Gog and call the birds and beasts (who will readily understand) to feast upon his flesh and that of his host (ch. 39, passim). All this is followed by the final vision of mythic rest toward which the exile, return, and apocalyptic battles have been pointing. God will "pour out [His] spirit upon the house of Israel" and all will be well.

Surely this remarkable series of visions represents the most thoroughly mythic prophetic theology we have yet encountered. But there are those who contend that Ezekiel is speaking of historical events, despite his development of the earliest explicit apocalyptic of the Scriptures.[1] Two specific features of Ezekiel's futuristic imagery

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[1] We are using the term "apocalyptic" in a somewhat broader sense than is usual. First of all, if apocalyptic literature looks forward to the end of the present dispensation and the establishment of a new order of things quite unlike the present human reality, then Ezekiel's visions of the future certainly qualify. And, secondly, if apocalyptic spells out in detail the features of this mythic future, Ezekiel's description of the restored Temple, the battle of God against Gog and the mythic rest to follow would also place this prophet's writings among the apocalyptic works. If certain of the characteristics of later apocalyptic are missing, it is because Ezekiel was the originator of this school which was in his time still in its earliest infancy.

For a balanced discussion of prophecy and apocalyptic in have led these scholars to an historic view of Ezekiel: the Davidic Messiah and the Solomonic Temple. We must deal with these elements of his thought before concluding our examination of the prophet's writings.

It is undeniable that Ezekiel speaks of Messiah and Temple. But we hold that his conception of both is thoroughly mythic rather than historical. His reference to the messianic king as "a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar" (17:22) is heavily mythic. The suggestion that he is speaking of a son of Jehoiachin, the hapless last king of Judah now a pitiful prisoner of the Babylonian conqueror is, we believe, without merit. Jehoiachin is no cedar; his position is anything but lofty. But the "sprig" image is undoubtedly messianic.[1] Thus, here as elsewhere the Messiah is an ideal projection expressing not confidence in, but contempt for and rejection of the historical personage presently holding the royal office. Additional messianic references in Ezekiel support our view. "David," the future "shepherd" who will feed God's people (34:23), will rule over the re-united nation (hardly an historic hope, as we have shown). In fact, this righteous mythic shepherd is explicitly contrasted with the corrupt historical shepherds (leaders) who actually lead the people. As there will be no war in the prophet's idyllic future, so the historical role of warrior-king will not exist. And, as we have seen, when apocalyptic conflict does break out, it will

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Israel, see D. S. Russell, The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 73-103. See also Walter Schmithals The Apocalyptic Movement (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), pp. 68-88, and Klaus Koch, The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1970), pp. 18-35.

[1] Compare with Jer. 23:5-6 and Zech. 3:8. We do not find Albright's claim convincing that Jehoiachin was ever the center of significant national hope for restoration. See W. F. Albright, The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 86.

be fought by mythic adversaries--God and Gog--with no human king playing any role whatever.

Further examination of the mythic figure of the Messiah in Ezekiel's vision takes us directly into a consideration of the prophet's second specific image of the future, the restored Temple. The Messiah--now referred to as "the prince" is to control the land around the "holy district" of the Temple (45:7) presumably to protect the sacred precincts. He will receive offerings from the people for the express purpose of supplying sacrificial materials for the Temple service (45:16-17). This reference together with the description of the "prince's" Temple functions (46:1-12) make abundantly clear that we are dealing here with anything but an historical, political figure. As we have seen, this prince is no warrior, nor does he order the political life of the nation (the tribes are to be settled in their original lands as in pre-monarchic times). His sole functions are to practice righteousness and see to the perpetuation of the cult. This is no king in any recognizable sense, but a figure of the prophet's imagination unrelated to any royal personage seen before or since.

And what of the Temple so minutely and lovingly described by the prophet in chapters 40 through 48? We need not read long to conclude that this is neither Solomon's Temple nor any Temple built in post-exilic times. Despite the opinion of some that the ideal Temple of Ezekiel's vision contains no Ark,[1] verses 1 through 5 of chapter 43 belie that view. However, the Ark is one of the few recognizable features of this mythic structure. Its vast dimensions, geometric perfection, and the stream of living water issuing miraculously from beneath its foundation make impossible any comparison of this vision with any actual building ever constructed--or intended for construction. Here again it is the prophet's role to contrast the eternal realm of the Divine King (with its mythic symbols of Messiah and Temple), with the historic kingdom, now defunct with its puny earthly monarchy and royal cult structure.[1] We might conclude that in his incomparable visionary projections, Ezekiel continues and refines the work of the Deuteronomistic writer and impresses the uneradicable seal of myth on the thought of the exile--a form of thought which was to dominate Israelite consciousness uninterruptedly for the next four centuries.

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[1] Kaufmann, p. 444.

Deutero-Isaiah

If the Deuteronomistic writer's reworking of the Temple tradition enabled Israel to worship in exile; if Ezekiel's visions of the Lord's throne-chariot among the captives brought God into Babylon to be with His people; then it fell to Deutero-Isaiah to map out the details of the great event in which this Divine King and His subjects, now united in exile might return together to Zion to establish His mythic Kingdom on earth.

In moving from Ezekiel to Deutero-Isaiah we are traversing the entire period of the exile (597-538 B.C.E.). In the early years, the great need had been to reassure the people that Jewish life need not disappear with the historical theology of the monarchy. Ezekiel responded to that need and in so doing, laid the necessary theological groundwork for the continuation of Jewish existence, not as a political nation but as a religious community--a mythic Kingdom beyond the reach of history.[1] As such Israel in Babylon re-vitalized its inner spiritual life, eventually developing new institutions and functionaries through which to express its new mythic self-consciousness. It is with considerable justification that the emergence of the synagogue is located in the exilic period together with the appearance of the scribe as guide of the faith. Now we do not mean to insist that synagogue and scribe arose at once in the captivity, but that the seeds of these new religious growths were sown quite early as a result of practical necessity.[2] Once worship was seen as possible in exile, some form of it must have existed, and being Israelite worship, that form must perforce have been communal. Deuteronomic law made sacrifice impossible outside the Temple precincts, so that prayer and study became the new forms of popular devotion. In both these activities the texts relied on must have been early sections of the Biblical corpus probably with an emphasis on the prophetic oracles which had been fulfilled in the people's own sight. Whatever places were chosen for this communal worship can legitimately be called early synagogues; and whoever acted as keeper and expounder of the texts in question--whether priest, noble, or prophet--was acting in the capacity of a scribe.

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[1] We do not mean to imply that Ezekiel the priest had opposed the historic temple. Lindblom is correct in stating that "The profanation of the Temple was to Ezekiel the most atrocious of abominations" (p. 383). But this desecration was precisely why the prophet could not envision an historic rebuilding of a similar structure that could be likewise polluted. His vision was a mythic one in which the Lord could rule in His Temple because He had already established His rule in the hearts of men.

With these new forms of community religious life, Israel redefined its identity in Babylon, coming to understand the earthly monarchy as an historic episode in the larger mythic context of the eternal Kingdom of God. But while that Kingdom was understood as eternal, it was not yet seen as universal in the ultimate sense of that term. Israel was God's Kingdom, alone among the nations in acknowledging the power of Him Who moved all peoples and events. Therefor there was still a special role to be played by the land of Israel as earthly locus of the eternal Kingdom. God and His people might be together in Babylon--might, in fact, have found each other again only because of the exile--but exile it remained from the land of promise associated with the fulfillment of the mythic Kingdom since the time of Moses. The need of the late exile was, then, for a return of the King and His subjects to the proper site of His Kingdom. And as the exile moved into its fifth decade, historical events began to develop in such a way as to make return to Zion a realizable hope. It was the great task of Deutero-Isaiah to express this hope in mythic terms proper to the new self-conception of his people.

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[1] Although Noth does not express himself in terms of a myth/history dialectic, his view of the non-historical character of this period is compatible with our own. Noth, p. 316.

[2] Ackroyd, p. 28.

One might say that between them Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah represented the twin traditions of Temple and monarchy which combined to make up the historical theology of David and Solomon. Ezekiel the priest and Deutero-Isaiah of the pro-monarchic Isaiah school personified these traditons in a unique and paradoxical form. Ezekiel freed God from the historic Temple only to restore Him in eschatological vision to a mythic one. And Deutero-Isaiah utilized all the great warrior imagery of Davidic sources to speak not of an earthly, but of a Heavenly King. There is in Deutero-Isaiah's writings not even a traditional messiah figure,[1] as if the prophet felt that even a heteronomous earthly "prince" such as that envisioned by Ezekiel, might dilute the power of the great message that God alone is King and in absolute control of all events. In this prophet we have a dynamic myth, consciously modeled in form and content on the original mythic faith of Moses.

The historic events bringing destruction for the faltering Babylonian empire were seen by Deutero-Isaiah as part of the furious worldwide activity that was about to usher in the Kingdom. As the Persian armies of Cyrus drew near, excitement gripped the captives in Babylonia as they heard their prophet reveal Who it was that was directing the conqueror's steps:

> Who stirred up one from the east
>   whom victory meets at every step?
> He gives up nations before him,
>   so that he tramples kings under foot: . . .
> I, the Lord, the first
>   and with the last; I am He.
> (Isa. 41:2, 4)

The true King is, of course, not Cyrus, but the Lord Who leads him on. No autonomous human action is seen in all these military victories. As in the days of the Judges, success on the field of battle is determined by the Lord of hosts. God's purpose in giving victory to Cyrus is, of course, the liberation of His people. And if that liberation was seen by Ezekiel the priest as the vindication of God's holiness, for Deutero-Isaiah it will be the revelation of His glory.

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[1] Deutero-Isaiah's references to Cyrus as the Lord's messiah are not to be understood as an expression of classical messianism. In fact, the attachment of this term to a non-Israelite would not have been possible if the prophet had retained any shred of the Davidic messianic hope. In historicizing the title and applying it to a foreigner, Deutero-Isaiah is acknowledging that history has passed beyond the grasp of Israel.

A voice cries:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
  make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be lifted up,
  and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
  and the rough places a plain.
And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
  and all flesh shall see it together,
  for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."
(Isa. 40:3-5)

The triumphant return to Zion led by God Himself is about to take place. Nature and history will both collapse before this mythic theophany. Valleys will rise and hills fall flat to make way for the glorious procession. Understood historically, this metaphor speaks of once lofty Babylon being "made low" while Israel is lifted up in a triumph of the mythic Kingdom over the historic. Mythic fulfillment will make plain all the rough places of history, revealing God's glory as manipulator of all to "all flesh." This universal conclusion, also found in Ezekiel above represents the nascent universalization of the Kingdom idea for which we must thank the exile itself and the wider horizons it opened to Israelite thought. The fact that the only usage of the term "Messiah" (anointed one) is in reference to the non-Israelite Cyrus (45:1) is also indicative of a remarkably universal outlook. God's redemption is, so to speak, international in scope.

But for Israel, there is no native Messiah, no Davidic hope. Ezekiel's messianic "shepherd" here becomes God Himself Who "will feed His flock like a shepherd" (40:11) as He gathers His people for the journey home.[1] Israel's hope, therefore, must be in the Lord Who is about to usher in His mythic Kingdom. History, properly so called, ended with the exile. God is about to do a new thing which will be nothing short of a new creation. For Deutero-Isaiah redemption and creation are one and the same thing.[1] He continually refers to the world's creation and Israel's redemption as parallel events.

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[1] We can finally agree with Lindblom in regard to the image of God as King. While he denies that the pre-exilic prophets "favored" the idea of the kingship of God (a view with which we could hardly be in greater disagreement), he now holds that in Deutero-Isaiah "There is . . . a substitute for the idea of the ideal king [Messiah], namely the idea of Yahweh, the King of Israel, who comes to His people in the theophany of the age to come" (Lindblom, p. 395).

> Was it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces,
> that didst pierce the dragon?
> Was it not thou that didst dry up the sea,
> the waters of the great deep;[2]
> that didst make the depths of the sea a way
> for the redeemed to pass over?
> (Isa. 51:9-10)

The "new thing" God will do will unite creation and redemption in a single act. All former categories are to be transcended.

> Behold, the former things have come to pass,
> and new things I now declare; . . .
> (Isa. 42:9)

> . . . the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
> and come with singing to Zion;
> everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
> they shall obtain joy and gladness,
> and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
> (Isa. 51:11)

Here is no simple historical repatriation of exiles, but a mythic event ushering in an idyllic Eden-like state, a new creation which

> ". . . shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
> for an everlasting sign which shall not be cut off."
> (Isa. 55:13)

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[1] Von Rad, p. 241.

[2] Once again, note in this reference to the Enumah Elish creation story, a new mythic universalism willing to adopt Babylonian mythology as revealing a truth about the mythic King of Israel. The redemption at the Red Sea is then seen as the mythic creation of a people understood not as an historical act but as a parallel to the primeval creation itself.

Kingdom Present and to Come

With Deutero-Isaiah's great vision of the mythic Kingdom to come, the initial period of exilic literature comes to an end.[1] The exile had brought together two strands of eschatological thought which had been separated heretofore, but which would henceforth be held in tension in Israelite theology. Mosaic theology had spoken of a present Kingdom of God in which the King ruled His people wherever they might be. When it spoke of the future, it was a realizable future which became present with the possession of the Promised Land by the tribes. Once the conquest of Canaan was accomplished, the Kingdom became a wholly present reality. Later with the co-option of the present by history during the monarchic period, prophetic thought became increasingly future-oriented. Certainly God ruled at the present time, but since king and people failed to recognize this in a practical as well as theoretical sense, stress naturally fell on that great future day when God's Kingdom would be revealed for all to see. Thus the realized eschatology of the Amphictiony became the future eschatology of the prophets.

It would seem that the exilic writers continued this future stress developed by the pre-exilic prophets. They even added explicitly apocalyptic content thus strengthening the identification of the Kingdom with last ends. But something had changed--something crucial that Biblical scholars have inexplicably failed to take into account. Once the words of Ezekiel had taken hold on the people, God was acknowledged to be their Sovereign in a new and compelling sense.[1] Now He dwelled among His subjects as King and they knew it. The exile had solved the twin problems which had in earlier times interrupted the direct relationship between Israel and its God. The destruction of the monarchy had removed the earthly pretender to the Kingly office proper to God, while the cataclysmic fulfillment of the prophets' predictions had cured the people of idolatry once and for all.[2] With the removal of its historical and nature-mythological rivals, the Kingdom of God became a present reality for Israel. The people understood themselves as subjects of the Divine King--a self-conception synonymous with their identity as Israel. No other definition of what it meant to be an Israelite was available. And it is only because this mythic one took hold that the community survived at all.

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[1] Following the Persian conquest of Babylon, non-Palestinian Jewish literature is properly called diaspora, not exilic.

But more was needed. Israel could no longer be satisfied with the realized eschatological existence which had been sufficient for the Amphictiony. This people had been profoundly changed by the future-oriented thunderings of the prophets and had been reshaped by the cosmopolitan existence in the Babylonian cities of settlement. Now these two elements--futurism and universalism--combined in Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah to form a vision of a future day--distant for the former, close at hand for the latter--when the Kingdom now present among God's people would become the universal reality of all mankind.

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[1] Albright, From the Stone Age to Christianity, p. 325, properly refers to Ezekiel as "the foremost figure of Judaism during the exile . . .", but fails to see his great initial vision as a proclamation of the presence of the Kingdom.

[2] One of the most striking results of the exile was that the popular idolatry which had plagued Israel during the monarchic period was never again to pose an internal threat to Jewish existence. For an eye-opening exposition of the extent of pre-exilic Israelite idolatry, see Morton Smith, Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 15-56.

> "And I will set my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my judgment . . ."
>
> (Ezek. 39:21)

> Behold, you shall call nations that you know not,
> and nations that knew you not shall run to you,
> because of the Lord your God, . . .
>
> (Isa. 55:5)

The Kingdom future will be the acceptance by all mankind of the Kingdom already present in Israel.[1] Never again would Israel understand its theology of the Kingdom in exclusively, or even in primarily, present or future tenses. Both the Kingdom present and the Kingdom to come became in Babylon essential elements receiving equal stress in Israel's royal theology. The messianic ideas of Jeremiah and Ezekiel had already began to give form and content to the developing conception of the mythic Kingdom to come; it remained for the post-exilic period to do the same for the mythic Kingdom present--that ancient Mosaic-Amphictyonic form of eschatology to which the exile had given new life.

2. The Restoration of the Mythic Kingdom

When Cyrus' Persian hosts marched into a prostrate Babylon in 539 B.C.E., the Jews were ready for them. We may hypothesize that soon after the fall of the city a Jewish delegation appeared before the new sovereign to beg leave for a return to the Judean homeland. Such a meeting seems probable because of the appearance within a few months of the Persian victory of a royal decree officially authorizing the repatriation.[1] The text of the decree, with certain obvious Jewish editorial additions, forms the dramatic introduction to the book of Ezra.

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[1] Smith's view (p. 93) that during the post-exilic Persian period, large numbers of gentiles already worshipped the God of Israel is interesting, but totally without support from any known evidence. The recognition by the world of Israel's God was a mythic hope having no foundation in the factual situation.

> "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, . . ."
>
> (Ez. 1:2-3)

The results of this proclamation among the Jewish captives were mixed. Ezra chapter 1 tells us that "every one whose spirit God had stirred to go" began to prepare for the journey (v. 5). But it also records that "all who were about them aided them" with various freewill offerings (v. 6). Thus we learn what is perhaps the most startling bit of information connected with the return to Zion. The remarkable fact is that many Jews--the majority and probably the vast majority in Babylonia--declined to be repatriated and were content to assist the returnees with material aid and moral support.[2] What an amazing change had come over the Jewish people! The political nation of 586 B.C.E. had become so thoroughly mythicized by 538 B.C.E. that most Jews saw no need to uproot themselves from their lives in the diaspora. The mythic Kingdom was as real in Babylon as it would be in Judah for these heirs of the Amphictyonic realized eschatology who, like their tribal ancestors, were caught up in a mythic reality so all-encompassing as to obviate the need for any external symbols.

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[1] The question of whether or not a Jewish group petitioned the emperor is not a crucial one. Such a meeting is purely hypothetical. But it does seem more likely that the Jews would have brought the matter to Cyrus' attention than that he would be sufficiently concerned with this tiny sect to issue his decree of repatriation on his own initiative.

[2] Albright, Biblical Period, p. 87, agrees with most scholars that few Jews responded to the edict; and, like most scholars, he fails to understand the theological reasons for this.

But for a minority, the symbols were needed. Four centuries of Temple-centered faith had not been totally forgotten. This group, though as mythic in their thinking as their brethren who remained in Babylon, felt a need for the restoration of a central shrine as a focus (in Deuteronomistic terms) for the prayer-life of the far-flung Jewish diaspora. This felt need does not in any way mean that the returnees were marching back into the historical life that had been suspended in 586 B.C.E. There is absolutely no evidence that they hoped to re-establish the Davidic monarchy. They did intend to rebuild the Temple but in the absence of an earthly king the Temple's role would be vastly different than it had been before the captivity. No longer would it be the king's private chapel, an integral part of the precincts of the royal palace. The restored Temple was to be the palace of the heavenly King Who now ruled His people directly without political intermediaries. The Temple to be rebuilt was not the sign of the Kingdom to come, as Ezekiel envisioned it, but the symbol of the Kingdom present--the Lord dwelling in the midst of His people--closer in conception to the shrines of the Amphictyonic period than to the politically connected structure of Solomon.

The repatriates returned home under the leadership of one Sheshbazzar who seems to have been a Judean of the line of David. Ezra 6:14 refers to him as "governor" but we have no way of learning the significance of this title at the time. If Sheshbazzar was "a prince of Judah" as Ezra 1:8 tells us, then his office is to be understood in the mythic terms of Ezekiel rather than in the historical terms of Davidic tradition. All the surrounding Ezra material (1:7-11) indicates that

Sheshbazzar's function was to act as guardian of the sanctuary, an ecclesiastic office with no political overtones or implications.

The first major task undertaken by the returnees was the laying of the Temple foundations (Ez. 3:10). Some months had passed since their arrival, but, considering the ruined state of the land and the destitute condition of the people, it is remarkable that the work was begun at all. At this time another Judean "prince" Zerubbabel,[1] grandson of King Jehoiachin, was sharing leadership with Jeshua, a priest of Zadokite lineage (3:8). In any event, the work stopped with the foundations barely in place (4:24). The cause of the halt in construction was probably the opposition of the Samaritans who had been rebuffed in their attempt to participate in the building.

> . . . they approached Zerubbabel . . . and said . . . , "Let us build with you; for we worship your God as you do, . . . But Zerubbabel [and] Jeshua . . . said to them, "You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build . . ."
>
> (Ez. 4:2-3)

This quarrel is instructive for it reveals the exclusively mythic nature of Jewish thought at this time. Rejection of the Samaritans made no political sense whatever. It would have been politically far wiser for the returnees to accept their aid and welcome them into the Jewish fold, as David had done with the pagan peoples he had incorporated into Israel. But the Jews were not reacting to a political situation. Their quarrel with the Samaritans--who may have claimed descent from northern Israel[1]--was a religious one. In ages of myth, disputes are naturally mythic in character. The purity of the cult was at stake, and since it was faith, not politics--spiritual rather than temporal matters--that pre-occupied the Jewish religious community, the Samaritans were rejected, thus inaugurating an ongoing quarrel which was to last until the second destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.

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[1] There is some confusion as to the identities of Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar. The Chronicler (editor and compiler of Ezra-Nehemiah) telescopes the two men's activities so that they run into each other. It is most probable that Sheshbazzar led the initial return in 538 B.C.E. and began work on the Temple foundations, soon abandoning the project. Some years later, his nephew, Zerubbabel led another migration of Jews from Babylon to Judah (this would explain the Chronicler's confusion) and, as governor, recommenced the Temple construction in 520 B.C.E.

We know nothing of the period from the cessation of work on the Temple to its re-commencement in 520 B.C.E., except for the evidence of Ezra 4:7-23 that an attempt to re-build the walls of Jerusalem was foiled by local officials perhaps at the instigation of the disgruntled Samaritans.

The events of 520-515 B.C.E. are significant for our review of the character of this period. The appearance of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah and their words of threat and encouragement to Zerubbabel are usually credited with bestirring the people to complete the Temple on the foundations laid and abandoned nearly two decades earlier (Ez. 5:1-2). But it is equally important to note that in the words of these prophets, Israelite political thought found its first expression since the fall of the monarchy. The irony of this situation is clear enough. In the historical age of the monarchy, the prophets had spoken for the mythic alternative. Now that myth was the dominant form of thought in Israel, these new prophets sought to re-kindle the long dormant flames of national historical ambition. In declaring that Zerubbabel was the Lord's "signet ring" (Hag. 2:23) and that Jeshua was "the Branch" (Zech. 3:8), the prophets spoke of living men as messianic figures through whom the Lord was "about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms; . . ." (Hag. 2:21-22).[1]

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[1] The Samaritans' claim that "we have been sacrificing to him [God] ever since the days of Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, who brought us here" (Ez. 4:2) may mean that they are presenting themselves as descended from repatriated northern Israelites of an earlier age. It is more likely, however, that they are claiming only religious association with Judah. Assyrian policy had been to re-settle conquered areas with people from another corner of their empire. Often these transplans would adopt the faith of their new region. Such is probably the origin of the Samaritans' Israelite faith, the purity of which was hardly up to the standards of the returned Jews.

This is no futuristic messianism on the model of Jeremiah or Ezekiel, but a political program of action (especially in the case of Haggai) which clashed violently with the mythic temper of the times. There is no evidence whatever that any popular uprising or even enthusiasm greeted these pronouncements.[2] We may even hypothesize that Zerubbabel himself was unenthusiastic over the suggestion that he follow in the historical footsteps of his Davidic ancestors. In any event, the Persians probably learned of the prophets' intemperate words and made off with the hapless Zerubbabel since he disappears from the records soon afterwards. The abject failure of these prophetic attempts to re-ignite political nationalism must have strengthened the dominant mythic orientation of the people. There was to be no further challenge to this form of thought until 152 B.C.E. when the program of Zechariah for a high priest who would "bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule upon his throne" (Zech. 6:13) would be spectacularly and unexpectedly accomplished in the reign of the Hasmonean priest-kings.[1]

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[1] The only throne the prophet could have had in mind was that of Persia.

[2] Bright is correct in stating that in response to the prophets' words, "no overt rebellion had taken place" (p. 354). But we would go further. We see no reason to suppose with Bright that there was even any "messianic excitement in Judah" generated by the futile attempted agitation of two prophets.

Ezra and the Torah Myth

At the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E. Israel had been re-established on its ancient homeland for more than a century and a quarter. With the sole exception of the incident of Haggai and Zechariah mentioned above, no desire for a restoration of the historical kingdom had been expressed by the people's spokesmen. Indeed those spokesmen were themselves the earthly functionaries of a purely mythic Kingdom. Israel was led by a hierarchy of priests, courtiers of the Divine King Who ruled a religious community characterized by a total absence of native political structures. Persian satraps saw to whatever limited governmental activities were needed to maintain the lax rule of a distant king over his subjects, but all available evidence indicates that the Persian yoke was a light one, hardly felt by the citizens of the far-flung empire. Despite attempts by some scholars to characterize the theological outlook of this period in more detail, it is, we believe, impossible to come to a definite conclusion as to whether the restored Temple was seen, as it had been before the exile, as the actual dwelling place of the mythic King. It would seem more likely that the Deuteronomistic conception of the Temple as an earthly point of contact between God in heaven and His people on earth, was dominant. However, in the absence of direct evidence of the existence of local houses of prayer (synagogues) in Judah at this time, we cannot be certain. If they did exist, they would indicate a diminution in the central role of the Temple at a rather early period as a result of a sophisticated theology of the omnipresence of a God not bounded by a particular sacred space.[1] As we have seen, this view had taken hold in Babylon and certainly continued to characterize diaspora Judaism. But the dominant attitudes in the restored homeland are less easily determined. But, whether the Judean theology of this time was more or less sophisticated in regard to the Temple's role in community life, we can be certain that that life was understood in mythic terms. The outer form of mythic existence had been set in exile but the task of giving content to that existence, specific structures by which the myth could be permanently internalized by the people, remained to be accomplished.

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[1] In fact the titles of king and high priest would not actually be assumed by one man until Aristobulus of the Hasmonean house did so in 104 B.C.E. (I Macc. 13:42). But more of that below.

Ezra provided the missing ingredient, a constitution for the mythic Kingdom without which Israelite religious existence could not have perpetuated itself. The events leading up to his arrival in Judah can only be hypothesized, but we are in a position to make some educated guesses. We do know that Ezra came to Judah from Babylon in one of a continuing series of migrations of small groups of Jews which had been going on since the initial return of 538 B.C.E. The intellectual center of Israelite life had remained in Babylon under Persian rule and it was probably in that city that the priestly writers had edited and composed the final version of the Torah book in an effort to preserve the ancient traditions of their people.

The structure of the book itself expresses the anti-historical thrust of Babylonian Jewish thought. The work ends with the unlikely episode of Moses' death, effectively interrupting the narrative before the entrance into Canaan, the conquest of the land, the settlement of the tribes and the establishment of the monarchy. The priestly writers could only have meant to convey by this abrupt editing the conviction that Israelite religion was complete at the end of the Mosaic period, long before the birth of the political state.[1] There can be no doubt in regard to their absolute rejection of the claims of the Davidic house and the new historical theology which it inspired. For them, there was only one King and His palace was the Temple, the ordinances of which, they pushed back into Mosaic times by means of the historical fiction of the tabernacle. Thus the work of rescuing the Temple concept from its original connection to the Davidic monarchy which had been practically accomplished by the Judean returnees, was given theoretical support by the priestly circles in Babylon.

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[1] If this was the case, then the decline of the Temple service denounced in Malachi 2, which dates from this period, can be seen as the result not of religious laxity, but of the rise of the synagogue and a new non-spatially oriented theology of Judaism. But, in the absence of evidence, all this remains hypothetical.

In the Torah as they compiled it, the stress was on Law. That Law was expressed in three categories: liturgical law, outlining in minute detail the functions of the Temple and the priesthood; ethical and moral low, governing the daily interaction of Israelites with each other; and ritual law, prescribing the rules of individual religious observance for the average man. The stress on this last category had grown in Babylon where observance of dietary laws, circumcision and Sabbath had come to be seen as definitive Jewish national traits in the absences of king and Temple.[2]

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[1] The most incisive analysis of the process of growth and editing which produced the Torah can be found in James A, Sanders, Torah and Canon (Philadelphia; Fortress Press), pp. 1-53.

[2] Noth, p. 297.

It has been hypothesized that the religiously conscientious Jewish community of Babylon petitioned the Persian court to allow one of their representatives to journey to Judah and introduce the restored community to the newly completed Torah book.[1] The Persian king, who shared his dynasty's devotion to the strengthening of local religious traditions as a means of maintaining political order, acceded to this request, going so far as to provide Ezra, the man chosen by the Babylonian community, with a royal commission to preach the Torah to Israel.[2] But more was at stake here than mere preaching. Ezra arrived in Jerusalem with a mandate from the king to establish the Torah as the sole legal foundation of Jewry, a comprehensive code of conduct, adherence to which would henceforth be definitive of Jewish identity and existence.

This Torah was nothing less than the Divinely ordained constitution of the mythic Kingdom, binding on every Jew wherever he might be living--for whatever his earthly location, he remained a subject of the realm of the heavenly King of Israel. The Torah was the Law by which the King governed His realm, establishing His rule over both the inner and outer lives of His subjects. In Torah, the mythic Kingdom present, received its necessary content as Law. It would be impossible to overstate the importance of the work of Ezra. This descendant of the ancient priestly line (Ez. 7:5) introduced into Israelite consciousness a new dominant element which was to radically reform Jewish life, reshaping the lives of the people and establishing a new structure of Jewish existence which was to outlast the priestly cult by two millennia.

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[1] Just what book it was that Ezra brought to Jerusalem is a matter of lively dispute among scholars. Rather than cite their various opinions on this question, we will simply state our own view that there is no reason to believe that the Torah was not completed by the beginning of the fourth century B.C.E. and that furthermore it seems to us quite likely that its completion was precisely the event which caused the Babylonian community to dispatch Ezra to Jerusalem to expound the new teachings.

[2] There is much debate over the date of Ezra's arrival. Kaufmann, "The Emergence of Judaism," in Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People, ed. Leo W. Schwarz (New York: Random House, Inc., 1956), p. 82, dates Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem as 457 B.C.E.; Albright, The Biblical Period, p. 93, holds with 428 B.C.E.; Bright, p. 363, agrees with Albright as usual; and even Noth concurs, pp. 319-20. The failure of Nehemiah to mention Ezra in his memoirs would lead us to favor a later date (398 B.C.E.) for Ezra's arrival, after the death or departure of Nehemiah, but no certain conclusion is possible without further evidence.

Soon after his arrival in Jerusalem, Ezra assembled the populace before the Temple to hear the first public reading ot the Law (Neh. 8). This great assembly might be seen as a covenant renewal ceremony reminiscent of those of Joshua's day (Josh. 24). But this day can also be understood as the birthday of Judaism in which the faith community which had arisen in exile out of the ashes of the historic kingdom came into its own. It is doubtful that Ezra the priest and the hereditary Levites who aided in the public recitation (Neh. 8:7) before the Temple fully understood that the book before them was destined to replace the Temple as focus of Israel's faith. But viewed with the hindsight of two thousand years, we understand the significance of this scene in which Ezra and his aides read from a platform facing the people and the Law book, with their faces turned significantly away from the Temple.

It is as scribe, not priest, that Ezra is remembered and although his reforming work included firm provisions for the perpetuation of the Temple service (Neh. 10:32-39), it was as architect of a new legal relationship between God and Israel that Ezra became the founder of Judaism, giving to it a mythic form not dependent on any external institution. As the tribal organization itself had given shape to the mythic Kingdom in Amphictyonic times, so now the Law was the only structure needed to flesh out the covenant relationship between the King and his subjects. The new functionaries of this Kingdom were the scribes whose sole task was to interpret the Law thus elucidating the will of God as it touched on the daily lives of His people.

The all embracing structure of the Law invalidated all previous definitions of what it meant to be a Jew, and established the re-constituted faith of Israel on a formulation at once universalistic and exclusivistic. Theoretically at least anyone of whatever racial, religious, or national background could, by submitting to the full authority of the Law, become a Jew;[1] but at the same time, no form of religious existence outside the Law was recognized as valid. This rather paradoxical tension between the universal and the particular inherent in the reform of Ezra was to provide the theological basis for both the religious isolationism of Judaism and the later religious imperialism of the Church for which the cross was to replace the Law as the essential and exclusive point of contact between God and man.

For Israel Torah gave final shape to the Kingdom present, as Messiah had done for the Kingdom to come. Thus the myth of the Kingdom became a "double myth" focussing on a realized eschatology as static and unchanging as that of the ancient Amphictiony while hoping and waiting for that future day when the history to which the surrounding non-Jewish nations were still subject would be ended by the irruption of the universal Kingdom of God in which all peoples would share in the mythic rest already enjoyed by the convenant Law community of Israel.

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[1] In this regard, the anti-racialist book of Ruth, written soon after Ezra, seems more in keeping with the theory behind his reform than does the great scribe's own racialist policy of expulsion of foreign wives apparently without any thought to the possibility of their conversion to the Torah faith (Ez. 10, passim).

This double focus brought together the present and future eschatologies of the tribes and the prophets. The result was Judaism--the mythic Kingdom of Torah and Messiah, of obedience and hope.

B. History Attempts to Co-opt Myth

1. The Mythic Kingdom of Priest and Scribe

It is no accident that we have so little knowledge of the history of Judah during the Persian period (538-332 B.C.E.) Scholars would be less surprised at this absence of information if they would recognize that the cause of this seeming void is simply that Israel had, at this time, ceased to exist in history, as we have used the term. Historical records relate historical events; their absence indicates not that "nothing is happening" but that what is happening is of an order other than the historical. The nearly seventy years between Ezra's arrival in 398 B.C.E. and the end of Persian rule were crucial for emerging Judaism. Ezra's reform, as profound and all encompassing as it was, could hardly have taken firm root in a day or even a year.[1] The Law which became the theoretical basis for Jewish existence on that fateful day of public recitation in the Temple square, required decades to be fixed in the daily consciousness of the people by the legions of scribal interpreters of which Ezra was the first.

During the same period, the Temple priesthood strengthened its position as an earthly hierarchy serving at the court of the heavenly King. The myth was all pervasive, but it received a double focus from the existence of these two groups of functionaries. For the priests, cultic Law prescribing activities proper to public worship at the Jerusalem Temple was the essence of the mythic life of Israel, while the scribes understood the myth primarily in terms of ritual and ethical-moral law binding on the daily lives of all Jews. This built in tension within the mythic community did not immediately come to a head due to the all-encompassing nature of the Law to which everyone subscribed. Priests acknowledged the authority of scribally interpreted ritual and ethical-moral Law, while scribes supported the priestly activities surrounding Temple worship.[1] The difference between the groups was a matter of emphasis and was thus prevented from exploding into all out conflict until the Seleucid period in which the priests were led to abandon their traditional functions altogether. But more of that below.

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[1] In this connection, Bright's statement that "Ezra's reform seems to have been completed within a year of his arrival in Jerusalem" (Bright, A History of Israel, p. 373) can be quite misleading. Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews XI, v, 5, may be correct that Ezra was old and died soon after his work of the first few months; but this does not mean that his reform was not carried on by the increasingly powerful scribal school he had founded.

Suffice it to say that in mythic periods, inner tensions are exclusively mythic. Such was the case in Persian-ruled Judah. We might point to one interesting development of this period as revelatory of its non-historical, intensely mythic character. The emergence of a new holy day can be traced to this time--a day whose theme reveals the mentality of an entire age. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) became in this period, the effective beginning of the liturgical year.[1] This sacred observance united the themes essential to both priests and scribes by bringing together concern for ethical-moral purification and elaborate Temple ritual. In no Israelite religious rite were individual and collective activities so united. And it is also extremely significant that this holy day alone among the many feast and fasts of Judaism was totally without historical content. It commemorated nothing; it re-enacted nothing; it conjured up no past mighty acts of God. Its theme was purely mythic, beyond time and space. Its landscape was neither the Egypt of the Passover, nor the wilderness of the Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth); but the inner landscape of the human mind and heart, the ultimate locus of the mythic Kingdom of the present rule of God. In this sacral observance the essential character of Israelite religious consciousness during the post-Ezra period stands revealed.

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[1] Writing of the situation in fourth century Judah, Bickerman states that ". . . the influence of the priests continued to rise. . . . In Jerusalem in the fourth century the priesthood was considered firmlyorganized by David himself. . . . The Jews imagined that they were living according to the Law of Moses. while the synagogue, unknown to the Torah, became a fundamental part of their devotional life. So 'the congregation of the Lord' became the basic element of the nation" (Elias Bickerman, From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees [New York: Schocken Books, 1962] pp. 14, 16).

With the conquest of the Persian empire by the armies of Alexander the Great and the establishment of Greek hegemony over

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[1] We cannot claim that the Day of Atonement was totally unknown during the pre-exilic period. Leviticus 16 which prescribes its detailed rituals is, of course, exilic; but Exodus 30:10 and Numbers 29:7-11 may be earlier. But even if they are not, it is hardly likely that the priestly writers in Babylon, intent as they were upon preserving the traditions of the first Temple, would have simply invented a new fast. What they probably did was to give greatly increased weight to an old tradition now that Israel had such need to expiate their guilt for the sins which they believed had caused the fall of the historical nation.

Neither classical nor modern sources offer us much help in coming to a firmer determination of this question. Mishna Yoma, devoted entirely to descriptions of the day's observances, concerns only the rituals of the second Temple period. Modern scholars generally avoid the question, simply assuming that the Day of Atonement as a major fast is a phenomenon of the second Temple period. Among these are: A. Z. Idelsohn, Jewish Liturgy (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 22-23; George Foot Moore, Judaism (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp. 55-63; Noth, p. 340; Bright, A History of Israel, p. 421.

Judah in 332 B.C.E. there was little discernable change in the life of the tiny enclave centered in Jerusalem.[1] Such formal shifts in the historical power balance can have but small impact on a people which had already moved beyond the realm of history. What little evidence we have indicates that the Jews passed into the Greek orbit without protest or concern, content that the mythic Kingdom in which they dwelled was out of reach of the political forces that swirled about them. For centuries the majority of Jews had lived in an ever-widening diaspora, scattered geographically but united, despite considerable heterodoxy, as subjects of the mythic Kingdom. Jerusalem with all its cultic significance and traditional associations was the earthly capital of the Kingdom, understood, as we have seen, as point of contact between the heavenly God and His human subjects. The changeover from Persian to Greek rule meant only that a new foreign governor would take office in Judah, and as the Persian Satrap had not interfered with the religious life of the community, the Jews had no reason to anticipate any disruption of their traditional ways.

Initially their hopes were not disappointed. Alexander's rule promised to rival in tolerance the Persian governmental style. However, the young conqueror hardly had time to lay out his administrative districts before succumbing to disease in 323 B.C.E. The results of his unexpected death were no surprise. Immediate civil war broke out between Alexander's leading generals with the area of our concern being divided between Ptolemy and Seleucus who established their capitals at Alexandria and Antioch respectively. Needless to say, tiny Judah, lying as it did midway between the two new centers of political power, was destined to be caught up in whatever conflicts might arise between these mini-empires.[1] And conflict there was, almost incessantly until 301 B.C.E. when the Ptolemaic empire finally took control of Palestine.[2] Again due to the non-historic nature of Jewish thought during this period, we know virtually nothing of the doings in Jerusalem under the Ptolemies. In such an informational vacuum we can only assume that affairs proceeded much as they had during the years of Persian control. There must certainly have been an intensification of Greek intellectual influences which had been growing in the Middle East since long before Alexander and there is little reason to doubt that the Jews were as susceptible to these influences as any other peoples in the area. However, given the powerful hold of mythic self-consciousness over the community, it was inevitable that elements of Greek culture would be accepted only so long as they did not threaten the all-pervasive religious life of Israel.[3] It appears that Judaism attempted to co-opt Hellenistic means of cultural expression for the sake of furthering its own religious interests. The supreme example of this attempt was, of course, the Septuagint, that third century B.C.E. translation of the Torah into Greek[1] which made the holy book available to the Greek speaking Jews[2] and new converts[3] of the western diaspora. A detailed examination of Greek influences on the Jewish people during this period would carry us far beyond the scope of this study.[4] We need only say here that at this time, Hellenism in all its cultural, social, and religious expressions was rapidly becoming the dominant civilizational expression of the known world. It has been properly compared in ubiquity and influence to present day Western technology. To accept Hellenism was to enter progressive, modern world civilization. Hellenism offered an open road into a new world of liberal humanism--a road eagerly taken by many descendants of the ancient cultures of the Middle East anxious to escape the stultifying atmosphere of unchanging traditional environments. For Judaism, only recently established as a religious community based upon an all-embracing Law, Hellenism was to pose the greatest challenge faced by the people since the Babylonian conquest.

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[1] Josephus, Ant. XI, viii, 5, gives us an intriguing but fanciful account of Alexander's bowing before the high priest who had come out of Jerusalem in procession to greet the young conqueror. Unlikely as the details of the story may be, however, we may have here an accurate expression of the mutual regard of Greeks and Jews during their earliest contact. So also, Josephus, Ant. XII, ii, 2, in which Greeks view Jews as worshiping the same God as themselves.

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[1] The precarious situation of Judah during this tempestuous period is summarized by Josephus, Ant. XII, iii, 3, ". . . they were very like to a ship in a storm, which is tossed by the waves on both sides . . ."

[2] Josephus, Ant. XII, i, 1, tells us that Ptolemy seized Jerusalem by deceit on the Sabbath and enslaved many Jews. Relations between Jews and Ptolemy subsequently improved.

[3] This fascinating period in which Jewry first accepted and then rejected Hellenism is treated in great detail in Martin Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974). As regards positive Jewish attitudes toward the Ptolemies, see pp. 29-31.

Throughout the third century B.C.E. the Seleucid and Ptolemaic empires faced each other across the strategically located territory of

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[1] Josephus, Ant. XII, ii. 4-14, ascribes the original idea of translating the Torah to the Greek Librarian at Alexandria.

[2] ". . . from the third century B.C. we find almost exclusively Greek inscriptions in Palestine. . . . even the Jerusalem of the third century B.C. may be assumed to have had a considerable Greek-speaking minority. . . . [at] the centre of world Judaism, now predominantly Greek-speaking" (Hengel, pp. 58-60).

[3] ". . . the Jews were first of all peoples we know to open wide the gates to proselytes" (Bickerman, p. 18). This racial and national openness reveals the mythic, exclusively religious character of Judaism at this time. See also Bickerman, p. 81.

[4] For this, we recommend, together with Bickerman and Hengel, Victor Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews (New York: Atheneum, 1974).

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Palestine. At length, under the strong leadership of Antiochus the Great, the Seleucids were in a position to challenge Ptolemaic hegemony in the area. Never having accepted Egyptian control over what they considered their natural constituency, the Seleucids engaged Ptolemy's armies and finally swept them from Asia in 198 B.C.E. What evidence we have indicates that the Jews welcomed the new Syrian rulers, perhaps out of eagerness to see the long conflict between them and the Ptolemies resolved; perhaps because the Seleucid emperor was prepared to offer the people official guarantees of their religious traditions.[1] In other words, the Jews took sides in a military and political conflict for reasons which were entirely non-military and non-political. They supported the power most willing and able to offer them assurances that the mythic pattern of their communal and individual lives would not be disturbed.

2. The Mythic Kingdom Under Siege

Under the Seleucids, Jewish life continued much as before for some years. The new rulers of the area showed little interest in interfering with the traditions of their subjects. Hellenism was the cultural faith of Antioch, as it had been of Alexandria but there is no evidence that any attempt was made to impose it upon subject peoples. The challenge posed to Judaism by Hellenism was real enough; however, it was a challenge which came primarily from within the community itself--and from an element in the community which might have been expected to be its most traditionally oriented faction.

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[1] Antiochus' decree which officially permitted the Jews to "live according to the laws of their own country" and authorized tax exemptions for "the priests, and the scribes of the temple" is reproduced in Josephus, Ant. XII, iii, 3.

As we have stated, an implicit tension existed in Jewish religious life from the time of Ezra onward. Although himself both priest and scribe, Ezra introduced into the communal faith a new element--the written book of the Law--which required an entire class of scribal interpreters to bring it to bear upon the daily lives of the people. This new class of religious functionaries sprang from the general population and seems to have remained both physically and spiritually close to the people in whose daily lives they were so deeply involved.[1] It was as if a new element had been introduced in between people and priests leading to a refocussing of popular religious practice and an increased remoteness on the part of the priesthood.

For centuries the hereditary priests had been the highest Jewish officials of the restored community. Under the Persians, royally appointed governors might be Jews as in the cases of Sheshbazzar, Zerubabbel and Nehemiah. But usually this was not the case due both to the Persian desire to control political events and the non-historical character of Israelite thought. But the high priest and his ecclesiastical hierarchy had, of course, to be Jewish. As the priestly function was hereditary, it was inevitable that this class, holding as it did the only powers permitted to Jews, would develop into a kind of aristocracy.[2] What was not expected was that the priesthood would fall increasingly under the influence of Hellenistic culture. This development cannot really be explained by the fact that the high priest served at the sufferance of local governors whose own outlook was heavily Hellenistic. After all, Ezra was a commissioned agent of the Persian emperor and he was totally devoted to the unique traditions of his people. The explanation for the growing Hellenization of the higher circles of the Jerusalem priesthood can be more readily found in the innate appeal of the new world culture to an aristocratic class removed from daily interaction with the people and eager to share in the sophisticated civilization which was sweeping the region.[1] Priests who held office due not to piety but to descent could hardly be counted upon to be faithful adherents of the Jewish tradition, and some of them began to conduct themselves as anything but devout Jews. As early as the period immediately following Ezra's brief appearance in Jerusalem, we learn that the High Priest Johanan murdered his own brother who had been seeking his position within the very walls of the Temple.[2] This incident illustrates the early degeneration of the high priesthood which was to continue throughout the Persian and Greek periods.[3]

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[1] "This class [the scribes] did not live in a social vacuum, but was supported by the broad sections of the urban population of Jerusalem, that is, by the mass of the people" (Tcherikover, p. 197). See also Bickerman, pp. 67-71.

[2] ". . . Jerusalem . . . made use of a form of government that was aristocratical, but mixed with an oligarchy, for the high priests were at the head of their affairs . . ." (Josephus, Ant. XI, iv, 8).

By the time of the Seleucids, it was clear that the priesthood as a class could not be counted upon to defend the Law by which the mythic King ruled His subjects. That duty had devolved upon the scribes who continued the ongoing task of interpreting the Law for the masses of the Jewish people. The Temple was still regarded by the people as the central symbol of the communal myth, but the higher priesthood had long since come to see itself in other than mythic terms. While the lesser priests in the country towns and villages of Judah remained close to the people, only journeying to Jerusalem periodically,[1] the high priest and his associates came to regard themselves increasingly as secular princes whose religious duties were little more than nominal. What had happened was that a new historical consciousness had invaded the highest echelons of Israelite leadership, while the popular consciousness remained intensely mythic. The ways of the great world had seduced the priestly aristocracy, while the way of Torah and the daily service of God continued to shape the self-identity of the average citizen.

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[1] Hengel, pp. 49-50.

[2] Josephus, Ant. XI, vii, 1, contains the account of this crime. But violations of the Law by the priesthood go back to Ezra's day. See Ezra 9:1-2 which singles them out as foremost in "faithlessness."

[3] We are speaking of a general tendency. There were, of course, individual exceptions such as Simon the Just. Josephus, Ant. XII, ii, 5.

This smoldering conflict came to a head with the accession to the Seleucid throne of Antiochus Epiphanes in 175 B.C.E. Declaring himself to be the visible manifestation of Zeus, he inaugurated a policy of vigorous Hellenization throughout his empire. However, it is doubtful that his efforts would have led to revolution in Judah had not the native Jewish aristocracy, alienated from its own people and their traditions, attempted internal reforms aimed at bringing the mythic Kingdom into the mainstream of contemporary world history.[2] The myth was thus threatened from within by an isolated but powerful minority imbued with historical consciousness, and from without by a willful

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[1] More specifically these were Levites, temple functionaries of the non-Aaronic families descended, theoretically, at least, from the ancient tribe of Levi.

[2] Bickerman (pp. 93-111), followed by Tcherikover (pp. 152-174) and Hengel (pp. 267-303), has conclusively demonstrated that it was the native Jerusalem Hellenists of the upper class who were the real instigators of the attempt to impose total Hellenization on Jewry. These are the "lawless men" of Israel referred to in I Maccabees 1:11.

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ruler eager to cooperate in the imposition of Hellenism on his Jewish subjects.[1]

A conflict within high priestly circles over who was to hold the office resulted in an appeal to the new emperor who awarded the position to one Joshua (who significantly used the Greek name, Jason) in return for a substantial bribe.[2] The high priesthood of Jerusalem was now held by a man who had quite simply bought the office. Jason, eager to please his royal master whose creature he was, embarked on a massive campaign of Hellenization in the holy city. Its most conspicuous expression was the public gymnasium established as a center of Greek sport, education, and religion. The games conducted there were under the patronage of Greek gods whose images were introduced into the city in what was probably the first appearance of pagan idols in Jerusalem since pre-exilic times. We must hasten to add, however, that idolatry was not really the issue in the minds of Jason and his fellow reformers. Hellenism, as we have stated, was to them the wave of the historic present and future. They were not seeking to replace one myth with another, to dethrone the God of Israel in favor of a foreign deity. Although such was the final result of their reforming activities, their initial intention seems to have been to shatter the power of the myth by challenging the exclusivism of its symbols. They were partisans of an active, progressive historical world view who sought to make Israel "like the nations."[1]

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[1] Tcherikover's attempt to present Antiochus as other than an ardent Hellnizer (pp. 125-8) is unconvincing.

[2] Josephus, Ant. XII, v, 1, is a bit garbled and blames Menelaus, Jason's rival, for the subsequent program of Hellenization. However, since Jason was high priest at this time, he alone would have had the power to inaugurate such a policy. Menelaus, when he did become high priest some years later, intensified Jason's Hellenizing campaign.

Jason, who was little more than an agent of the Seleucid King, continued his Hellenizing efforts for three years, at which point another Jerusalem aristocrat, Menelaus by name, offered Antiochus a larger bribe than Jason was prepared to meet, and was appointed in the latter's place. Israel may not have become "like the nations," but the high priests certainly had. The continuing tale of plotting and murder resembles nothing more than the intrigues of an oriental court, for indeed this is what the Jerusalem priestly class had become. Even a general summary of the convoluted doings in Jerusalem at this time would take us far afield. We need only state that Menelaus intensified his predecessor's policy of Hellenization, going so far as to cooperate in Antiochus' sacking of the Temple's sacred objects in 169 B.C.E.[2] At this the Jewish populace began to resist the aggressive policies of the apostate high priest and his imperial sponsor. The historic mentality of the internal and external enemies appeared to the Jewish subjects of the Divine King to be idolatry pure and simple. And from their mythic standpoint, so it was. Apparently popular opposition was seriously threatening the Hellenizers' program because Antiochus found it necessary to invade Judah in 167 B.C.E., slaughter some of the inhabitants, enslave others, and reduce sections of the city to rubble.[3]

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[1] I Macc. 1:10-15.

[2] I Macc. 1:20-24. Josephus, Ant. XII, v, 2-3.

[3] I Macc. 1;29-36. Josephus, Ant. XII, v, 4.

3. The Hasidic-Maccabean Revolt

An all-out policy of religious persecution was now inaugurated with the cooperation of the apostate members of the priestly aristocracy and other leading families. Jerusalem was re-named Antioch and a new city within the city--the Acra--was erected to house what was to be a permanent Seleucid garrison. The city itself began to rise again as a Greek polis devoid of Jewish character and the Temple was turned into a pagan shrine devoted to "the god of the heavens" as easily identifiable with Zeus as with the Lord of Israel. As resistance intensified, the persecutors turned their attention to the countryside, punishing with torture and death those who held to the ancient traditions of circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath observance.[1]

Prompted by this wave of terror, organized popular opposition began to form around a group known as the Hasidim (the pious or faithful ones) who were probably closely connected to the scribes and teachers of the Law. They saw themselves as defenders of the myth against the forces of history as well as idolatry. This larger view of the struggle is expressed in their great literary production, the book of Daniel, which attacks both idol worship and the royal pretensions of earthly monarchs. Its view of the latter is stated over and over again as Daniel records the triumphs of the Heavenly King over the would-be rulers of this earth. The Hasidic author of Daniel sees the struggle against Antiochus as a conflict of historical and mythic kingdoms which will soon end with the establishment by Divine intervention of the rule of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

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[1] I Macc. 1:42-64. This persecution was based upon a new edict issued by Antiochus Epiphanes prohibiting Jewish practices, thus overturning the edict of toleration proclaimed by Antiochus the Great thirty years earlier.

> And in the days of those [earthly] kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever; . . .
>
> (Dan. 2:44)

Fired by this mythic hope of Divine apocalyptic intervention near at hand, the Hasidim resolved to remain faithful to the Laws of their true King. Their devotion to the Law was such that they refused to defend themselves if attacked on the Sabbath, hoping perhaps that such piety would provoke heavenly action against the persecutors and in defense of the faithful.[1]

What was clearly needed was a Jewish leadership willing to use historical methods against an historical foe. Just as the Amphictionic mythic Kingdom had been forced a millennium earlier to adopt political-military means against the armies of Philistia, so now the Hasidic devotion to the Laws of the mythic King would have to be expressed at least partially in historic action. Once again, the pendulum of Israelite thought was about to swing. As in the days of Samuel and Saul, practical necessity forced the myth to adopt historic means of self-defense.

In the Hasmonean family of minor country priests, the Hasidic movement found its much needed leadership. Mattathias an old priest of the village of Modein began the revolt by assassinating a Seleucid officer and an apostate Jew and fleeing to the hills, there to organize a guerilla band of pious defenders of the threatened mythic Kingdom and its Laws.[1] But, however imbued with mythic consciousness these Hasidic zealots may have been, the practical Hasmoneans were able to prevail upon them to suspend Sabbath prohibitions against battle until the war had been won.[2] The Hasidim had accepted Hasmonean leadership and were willing to agree to this temporary relaxation of the Law, for the sake of the Law. This was, however, a Hasmonean reform which the Hasidim would not have initiated on their own. The significance of all this may be that, from the very beginnings of the revolt, the Jewish forces were divided between the mass of Hasidic fighters imbued with a powerful sense of the Kingdom present and to come and a Hasmonean leadership group who approached problems in terms of practical military necessity, more characteristic of historical thought. This distinction was to deepen into an open split as the revolution continued.

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[1] I Macc. 2:29-38.

Mattathias died, leaving the movement in the capable hands of his son Judah the Maccabee (the hammer),[3] who seems to have been something of a military genius. Judah launched attack after attack on the enemy forces and, remarkably, achieved rapid success, rallying virtually the entire nation behind his efforts to re-establish the Law in Israel. In December of 165 B.C.E. his armies marched into a liberated Jerusalem and rededicated the Temple to the God of Israel.[4]

Jerusalem was now secured with the exception of the Acra into which Seleucid troops and apostate Jews had fled at Judah's approach.

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[1] I Macc. 2:29-38.

[2] I Macc. 2:40-42.

[3] Henceforth the Hasmonean will be referred to as the Maccabees as they were popularly known.

[4] I Macc. 3:1-4:61.

Having reclaimed the center of the faith, Judah now led his armies out into the hinterland of Palestine to relieve Jews still being persecuted under Antiochus' program of religious repression. For the first time in four centuries Jewish armies were on the march in defense of the faith. Judah dispatched his brother Simon to Galilee and he himself went into Trans-Jordan to gather up all faithful Jews and bring them to safety in Jerusalem.[1]

Unsuccessful in his efforts to reduce the Acra, Judah turned his attention to defending his gains against a renewed Seleucid assault in 163. Faced with overwhelming odds, the Maccabean army was forced to withdraw into Jerusalem. While making preparations for withstanding an extended siege, Judah received word that the enemy was willing to make peace. This surprising news was probably the result of unsettled conditions in Syria which required the army's presence at home. In any case, the Seleucid leadership was not willing to devote months and perhaps years to pacifying a Judean population now virtually united in their zeal for the Law. A truce was agreed to and the Seleucid force withdrew, leaving only the garrison in the Acra. Antiochus' edict of persecution was rescinded and the Jews were guaranteed the right to religious liberty originally recognized by the first of their Seleucid rulers nearly forty years earlier.[2]

At this point the differences within the Maccabean movement came to the fore. The Hasidim had taken up arms in defense of the mythic Kingdom whose Laws had now been restored. The historical threat to the myth had been beaten back and Jews were free to live unmolested as subjects of the Divine King. What more was there to fight for? Historical action--the temporary use of military and political means--could now be abandoned for the traditional mythic categories of Jewish existence which had dominated the self-image of the people for four centuries.[1]

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[1] I Macc, 5;9-54.

[2] I Macc. 6:18-63.

But here the Maccabees broke with their Hasidic followers. Having begun as a religious war, the struggle against foreign oppression had, in their minds, become a war of national liberation. The faith seemed safe for the moment, but Judah was still under foreign political control; this the Maccabees were determined to bring to an end. Apparently enough of their followers had been imbued with the earthly-historical spirit of nationalism to enable the Maccabee brothers to continue the struggle. From this time on the war of the Maccabees became a political revolution devoted to the re-establishment of the independent state of Israel. The pattern of a thousand years earlier was about to be repeated. The myth, having adopted historic means of self-defense, was now co-opted by the historic forces it had set in motion. However, unlike the situation at the time of David and Solomon, there remained in Maccabean Israel sufficient opposition to the new historical self-definition to prevent the total swallowing up of mythic consciousness. The Hasidim remained opposed to the military and political adventures of the Maccabees and were to form the core of the soon to emerge Pharisee movement around which the anti-historical forces of Jewry would regroup.

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[1] Among contemporary scholars, Noth makes most of this split in the revolutionary ranks. We believe that he is correct in doing so. Noth, p. 373. See note below.

4. The Maccabean Period: Historic Monarchy and Mythic Opposition

The Maccabees pursued their war of independence with mixed success due to the defection of much of their original following.[1] Judah won important victories in 161 B.C.E., but in the next year he was defeated and killed in battle.[2] His brother Jonathan succeeded to the leadership of what had by now been reduced once again to a guerilla force with little support from the people who were, as we have seen, content to enjoy their restored religious liberties. This mythic mentality dominated the mass of the population while Jonathan and the Maccabee force maintained themselves in a country fortress and the restored Sadducean priesthood (legitimate but friendly to the Seleucids) officiated in Jerusalem. But in 153 B.C.E., as a result of intrigues at the Seleucid court too convoluted to detail here, Jonathan was given royal permission to enter Jerusalem and maintain an armed force of his own.[1]

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[1] One remarkably revelatory line in Maccabees proves not only that there was a split in the ranks of the Jewish fighters over the myth-history issue, but that this division was so deep as to cause the Hasidic defectors from the Maccabee forces to attempt a separate peace with the Seleucids. I Macc. 7 tells us that the Seleucids invaded the country once again, not this time to persecute Judaism, but rather to end the military-political threat posed by Judah Maccabee who had refused to disband his forces. At the approach of the Seleucid army "the Hasidim were the first among the children of Israel who sought peace of them" (I Macc. 7:13). But it was the fate of these mythically-minded men to be crushed between the historic forces of the Seleucids and their priestly allies (the peace delegation is slaughtered by them in v. 16) and those of Judah Maccabee who "went out into all the coasts of Judea round about, and took vengeance on the men that had deserted him" (v. 24). Nevertheless, the Hasidim remained strong and continued (as the later Pharisee movement) to speak for large numbers of the population.

[2] I Macc. 7:26-9:22.

Furthermore, in 152 B.C.E. Jonathan was named high priest by the Seleucid king.[2] Technically he had no right to the office, being of minor priestly lineage, not of the descent of Aaron. But by this time the position had long been a political plumb with little significance in the daily religious lives of the people. In effect Jonathan became king of Judah and vassal of the Seleucid emperor. He proved to be a master of political intrigue and military maneuver. Together with his brother Simon, he extended Judean territory northward and greatly strengthened Judah's military domination over the area. Alarmed by his growing power, the Seleucids assassinated him in 143 B.C.E.[3]

He was succeeded by his brother Simon who finally succeeded in capturing the Acra in Jerusalem, thus eliminating the last outpost of Seleucid power in the region. He conquered additional territories to the north and south and extended Judean control to the Mediterranean coast. Simon died in 134 B.C.E. at the hands of his ambitious son-in-law Ptolemy.[4] Following a series of complex maneuvers, Simon's son John Hyrcanus came to the throne. He extended the borders of his kingdom to include trans-Jordanian territories, Samaria, Edom, and other neighboring lands which had not been subject to Jerusalem's rule since the death of Solomon.[5] Under John Hyrcanus, the dispute which had split the revolutionary movement at the time of Judah Maccabee erupted anew. Josephus, Ant. XIII, x, 5-7, tells us that Hyrcanus (and presumably the other Hasmonean rulers before him) was an adherent of the Pharisee sect. When the Pharisees demanded that he give up the high priesthood (to which he was not entitled by descent), he broke with them and declared their religious legislation void. Hyrcanus then went over to the Sadducee (Zadokite) sect of nobles and leading priestly families which descended from the Hellenizing priests of the early Seleucid period. Thenceforth the Hasmoneans were allied with the same forces they had once called all Israel to oppose.

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[1] I Macc. 9:23-10:14.

[2] I Macc. 10:15-21. For all practical purposes Jonathan had assumed the powers of high priest (explicitly) and king (implicitly). Henceforth, Hasmoneans would hold both offices simultaneously.

[3] I Macc. 10:67-12:53.

[4] I Macc. 13:1-16:24.

[5] Josephus, Ant. XIII, viii-x, 2.

If we are to make sense of this account, we must fill in many blanks. If Josephus is to be believed, we must assume that, following Hasmonean successes in establishing an independent Judah, the Hasidim were content to have the government in their hands as long as the spiritual lives of the people remained under scribal guidance. Whatever theoretical mythic objections they might have had to an earthly-historical monarchy, the alternative of a foreign occupying power that might once again attempt to destroy Judaism must have reconciled them to Maccabee rule. But Josephus' account makes clear that the scribal party (now known as Pharisees) was just biding its time until they felt strong enough to challenge the royal family itself on issues of Law. The military and political power of the Hasmoneans together with the danger of foreign invasion if the political structure of the nation were to crumble, led the Pharisees to attack the Hasmoneans not on the issue of the kingship but on that of the high priesthood. But the royal family was not about to give up any of its perquisites. Josephus tells us that the Pharisees "have so great a power over the multitude, that when they say any thing against the king, or against the high priest, they are presently believed."[1] Now if this was true, as we believe that it was, then the Hasmoneans had ruled with popular support only because the Pharisees, for reasons of the survival of the faith (as stated above) had not opposed them. But with the break between the monarchy and the Pharisees, the dynasty's popular support dried up. As Josephus states, "From this source arose that hatred which he (Hyrcanus) and his sons met with from the multitude."[2]

We took time to discuss the above so as to demonstrate that at no time during the Hasmonean period (165-63 B.C.E.) did the mass of the people become imbued with the historical mentality of the Maccabees. When they supported the native monarchy, it was because the Pharisees led them to do so, realizing that the mythic Kingdom present which was embodied in the Law would be in constant danger under the foreign rule that was the only alternative to the Hasmoneans. But once the Maccabees broke with the Pharisees and attacked the Law, the people became indifferent to the fate of the Hasmonean dynasty. Throughout, the real popular issue was defense of the myth, not of the historic state.

John Hyrcanus died in 104 B.C.E. and was succeeded by his son Aristobulus who, having had his mother starved to death, incarcerating three of his brothers and murdering a fourth, proceeded to crown himself king of Judah, thus officially assuming a title that had long been implicit in Maccabee rule.[3] He died a year later and was followed on the throne by his brother Alexander Jannaeus, an able warrior who succeeded in conquering what was left of Palestine not yet under

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[1] Josephus, Ant. XIII, x, 5.

[2] Josephus, Ant. XIII, x, 6.

[3] Josephus, Ant. XIII, xi, passim.

Jerusalem's control.

The steadily growing popular opposition to the Hasmoneans exploded in 90 B.C.E. when segments of the Judean population rebelled. Jannaeus put down the native opposition in a reign of terror and ruled with the support of his army until his death in 76 B.C.E. His military conquests had extended the territories of the nation beyond the borders of the Davidic-Solomonic empire, but at home his degenerate rule was little supported by his own people.[1]

Alexander Jannaeus' wife Salome Alexandra seized the throne following her husband's death. Her reign was historically uneventful due to her uninterest in military affairs and her surprise reversal of Hasmonean policy by inviting the Pharisee opposition to guide her decisions.[2] Following her death in 67 B.C.E. her two sons fell to disputing over the succession. The people, long accustomed to the decadent ways of the Hasmoneans watched in disgust as the struggle dragged on. But victory was to be denied to both brothers. The fratricidal conflict was ended by Roman intervention which also ended the century old Hasmonean monarchy. Both brothers had appealed to Rome to support their respective causes while the Pharisees had asked the Roman general Pompey, newly arrived in Syria, to intervene and put an end to the historic kingdom altogether.[3] This Pompey did, although naturally not for the mythic reasons for which the Pharisees desired an end to the Maccabees.

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[1] Josephus, Ant. XIII, xiii, 5.

[2] Josephus, Ant. XIII, xvi, 1, tells us that the queen was acting upon the death bed instructions of her husband so as to gain popular support. Under her reign, the Pharisees had all authority to rule the mythic Kingdom with official approbation, as they had long done without it.

[3] Josephus, Ant. XIV, iii, 2. The importance of this account is such that we will reproduce it in full:

In 63 B.C.E. a Roman army arrived at Jerusalem to which it was readily admitted by most of the population, presumably eager to accept any alternative to the irreligious, degenerate rule of the Hasmoneans. A relatively small company of nationalists fortified the Temple from which they resisted the Romans for three months. But in the end, the sacred precincts fell into the invaders' hands as did the whole of Judah. The monarchy was abolished and the state made over into a province of Rome. The conquerors did, however, recognize the high priesthood which was maintained in Hasmonean hands but stripped of all political power. Once again as had happened in 586 B.C.E., foreign intervention had put an end to an Israelite historical kingdom.[1]

But, as we have noted, the parallel is not exact. The Davidic kingdom doubtless had had the support of the vast majority of Israel. Despite its earthly-historical character, it had at least claimed Divine sanction, going so far as to develop a new theology to justify its power. Only the prophets--isolated, ridiculed, out of step with the temper of their times--kept alive the mythic faith. But in the

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> "He [Pompey] heard the cause of the Jews, and of their governors Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, who were at difference one with another, as also of the nation against them both, which did not desire to be under kingly government, because the form of government they had received from their forefathers was that of subjection to the priests of the God whom they worshipped . . ."

This passage makes crystal clear that the mythic Kingdom had remained the invisible dwelling place of the Jews since the exile, despite the hundred year earthly monarchy that had made so little impression on the popular mentality imbued with an all-encompassing myth.

[1] Josephus, Ant. XIV, iv, 2-5.

Hasmonean period, religious justifications were taken seriously by very few. The seizure of the high priestly office by a family not entitled to it by heredity, the purely military and political ambitions of the rulers, the decadent life-style of their court and their scandalous family intrigues revealed the Hasmoneans for what they were. No better or worse than any other petty monarchy of the Hellenistic period, but a world away (or better, a Kingdom away) from the pious ideals instilled in the populace by the scribes of the Law. It was not an isolated prophet here or there who opposed this monarchy, but the whole spirit of a people who had been taught to think of themselves as obedient subjects of a holy and righteous God.

The religious struggle which was to have led to the perfecting of the Kingdom present by the inbreaking of the apocalyptic Kingdom envisioned by Daniel led instead to a native monarchy led by rulers who had long forgotten what the war had been about. The spectacle of descendants of Mattathias making common cause with the Hellenistic priesthood and entering into open conflict with the Pharisee descendants of the Hasidim was not lost on the people. But the Hasmoneans had achieved one important victory for the mythic Kingdom. With all their personal apostasy from Judaism, they had successfully held off Seleucid attempts to put an end to the faith of Israel. In Maccabean Palestine scribes and Pharisees may have had no influence in government circles much of the time, but they were free to continue their work among the people. With the increasing corruption of the monarchy and the high priesthood, the populace looked to the Pharisees for leadership, to the Law as expounded in the local synagogues for guidance. Thus the absolute historicization of the Judean aristocracy--

priestly and governmental--led ironically to an intensification of the mythic consciousness of the masses of Israel who knew that to be a Jew meant not to be loyal to the petty earthly monarchy of the Hasmoneans, but to be subject to the eternal rule of the Divine King--observing His Torah in which His Kingdom was present, hoping for His Messiah[1] in whom His Kingdom was to come.

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[1] The apocalyptic hope of Daniel 7 with its messianic "one like a son of man" (v. 13) was a vital part of popular Pharisaic faith.

CHAPTER III

THE POST-BIBLICAL AND MODERN PERIODS

A. Myth Co-opts History

1. Apocalyptic: The Aptheosis of the Messianic Myth

History under Mythic Siege

With the collapse of the Hasmonean monarchy, Israel once again assumed an outward form co-extensive with its actual inner life. As we have seen, the historical kingdom of the Maccabees had never reflected the dominant self-conception of the people which remained mythic throughout the period. The basis for this ongoing popular refusal to be seduced by the native monarchy was the rich and powerful content that had been given to the formal concept of the Kingdom present by Ezra. In Torah the people found an exalted image of man and God as subject and King of a Divine realm , the daily reality of which was immediately experienced in terms of joyful obedience to the Law. The scribes and teachers of the Law eventually spearheaded by the Pharisee sect kept alive this sense of the presence of the Kingdom in every aspect of the life of the Jew.[1] Against this legion of ambassadors of the heavenly

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[1] Moses received the Torah on Sinai, and handed it down to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Synagogue (Avot 1:1).

The men of the Great Synagogue mentioned in this fanciful sequence were the scribes (sopherim) established by Ezra to copy, teach, and interpret the Torah. The Great Synagogue may or many not have been an actual institution or specific school of scribes. Avot 1:2 implies it was in identifying Simon the Just as "one of the last of the Great court, the Hasmoneans with all their earthly splendor, political sagacity, and military genius could make little headway.

The Maccabees must have been puzzled and frustrated at their failure to win the people to their dynamic, historical conception of Israelite existence; and we might share this puzzlement if we were to attend only to the legal aspects of Pharisaic teaching. After all, in ages of myth--even a myth as powerful as that of the Torah--many will come to yearn for the world of action and forward movement represented by the historical mentality. A myth exclusively concerned with the present--regardless of how deep and rich with meaning that present may be--cannot forever hold the future at bay. But, of course, there was--there had been since the age of the great prophets--another side to the Israelite myth of the Kingdom. Long before Ezra had, in Torah, given content to the myth of the Kingdom present, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had fleshed out the hope for the Kingdom to come. Messianism--the mythic

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Synagogue." If this reference can be credited, the Great Synagogue was probably a school of official teachers and interpreters founded by Ezra (399 B.C.E.) and kept together perhaps by the high priests themselves until its dissolution for unknown causes during the Ptolemaic period (Simon the Just was high priest until his death in 270 B.C.E.). The breaking up of the institution could certainly not have indicated any weakening of Torah in Israel. It might, however, have marked a split between the Jerusalem priesthood and the scribes who may at this point have moved into the countryside to teach Torah directly to the people in what was the first attempt in world history to achieve universal education. "And they taught in Judah, having the books of the law of the Lord with them, they went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people" (II Chron. 17:9). For a concise and careful sketch of the scribes and their work, see R. Travers Herford, Talmud and Apocrypha (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1971), pp. 43-62. Also these classic studies which are, to our mind, especially helpful as regards this period: H. Graetz, History of the Jews (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1891), I:389-441; Graetz was among the earliest scholars to suggest that the "great synagogue" was not a separate institution, but a way of referring to the entire Jerusalem religious community (p. 381); Max Radin, The Jews Among the Greeks and Romans (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1915), pp. 66-75; Moore, I:29-47, Moore seems to doubt the existence of the Great Synagogue as anything more than a name for the scribal class as a whole.

appropriation of the symbols of the historic monarchy of David--had centuries earlier re-introduced into Israelite myth the dynamic, historic thrust that had been lost between the ages of Moses and the Judges.

Now, as we have stated, the messianic idea had never been truly historical, had never spoken of autonomous men freely acting out their own lives, improvising their own existences. God was the ultimate actor in the messianic drama and whatever men did or did not do, all was subsumed under the Divine plan for Israel and the world. The focus was, of course, on events in that world, but only insofar as they led inexorably to a new age, a new state of being, in which forward movement would finally cease and all come to rest in the mythic Kingdom of the future. But, despite the ultimately mythic nature of messianic thought, it did provide the dynamic thrust into the "not-yet" that the already present Kingdom needed to give it temporal life. Having found these "historical" elements in the myth itself, the post-exilic community had no need of an earthly monarchy to provide them with a sense of national destiny.[1] In the face of a true sense of religious mission, the petty purposes of politics are put to shame.

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[1] This statement is based on the hypothesis that the post-exilic community, with all its stress on Torah did not forget the teachings of the prophets. The forecasters of the fall of the Davidic kingdom could hardly be ignored by the descendants of those who had lived through it. And if a heavy sense of guilt for the sins that had brought on the exile was characteristic of the post-exilic period (a guilt that partially explains the people's eager acceptance of the Law as a means of expiation and reconciliation with God) so must have been a certain hope and expectancy. After all, they could hardly recall the prophets' oracles of doom without remembering as well their messianic prophecies of hope. Our hypothesis of a continuing messianic consciousness in Israel is supported by chapters 9 through 14 of Zechariah, written in the fourth and third centuries B.C.E., that is during the period dominated by intense scribal activity.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you; . . .
(Zech. 9:9)

The double consciousness of the Kingdom present and to come was essential to the Hasidic movement which mobilized both in defense of the Law and in hope of the messianic advent. These faithful subjects of the King never hesitated to state frankly and openly just what they thought of those political purposes which were the essence of the Hasmonean movement with which they were allied. In the earliest days of the revolution, even before the defeat of the Seleucid enemy, the Hasidic author of Daniel referred rather condescendingly to the Hasmoneans as "a little help" (Dan. 11:34). This reference gives us some idea of what the Maccabeans had to deal with in these pious allies in the struggle against the foreign enemy. Judged in terms of the historical realities this slighting Hasidic attitude shows remarkably little gratitude for the decisive saving role played by the valiant Judah and his brothers in the liberation of the country from the oppressor. But, of course, the Hasidim were not viewing events in terms of history. They were caught up in a full blown apocalyptic myth which understood the present struggle as the birthpangs of the Kingdom of God.[1] Their eyes were on the coming of,

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> "Behold a day of the Lord is coming, . . . For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, . . . Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations . . . Then the Lord your God will come, and all the holy ones with him. On that day there shall be neither cold nor frost. And there shall be continuous day . . . And the Lord will become King over all the earth; . . ."
> (Zech. 14:1-3, 5-6, 9)

Such prophecies kept the messianic hope for the mythic Kingdom to come very much alive in the popular mind during the period of the solidification of the Kingdom present as Torah. Here we find the temporal link between the messianism of the ancient prophets and that of the apocalyptic seers.

[1] Stanley Brice Frost, Old Testament Apocalyptic (London: The Epworth Press, 1952), pp. 20-23, 178-209. The interpretation of the ills of the present as constituting the birth pangs of a golden age to come is characteristic of apocalyptic thought.

> . . . one like a son of man,
> and he came to the Ancient of Days
> and was presented before him.
> And to him was given dominion
> and glory and kingdom,
> that all peoples, nations, and languages
> should serve him;
> his dominion is an everlasting dominion
> which shall not pass away,
> and his kingdom one
> that shall not be destroyed.
> (Dan. 7:13-14)

How could the Maccabees compete with such a vision? The universal scope of the Kingdom, which had been something of an aftertought for Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah, had in Daniel's apocalyptic conception become the essence of God's redemptive plan. Hasmonean nationalism had been left far behind. The messianic figure who had in Jeremiah and Ezekiel been conceived as fully human (albeit presiding over a mythic future dispensation) had become this apocalyptic ruler coming "with the clouds of heaven" (v. 13), having the appearance of the human but the qualities of the Divine, not unlike the enthroned God of Ezekiel's vision ("a likeness as it were of a human form" [Ezek. 1:26]). What were the royal pretensions of the Maccabees compared to this? And finally, the ancient prophetic hope for a new age, implicitly apocalyptic due to its near total discontinuity with actual historical reality, had in Daniel become the explicit apocalyptic vision of the end of all history complete with a last tribulation, a resurrection of the dead, and a final judgment (Dan. 12:1-3).[1] The Hasmonean intention to alter the political situation was simply not in this league.

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[1] Moore, II:279-395, still offers the definitive overview of the development of Jewish ideas regarding all forms of life beyond death. He correctly points to the apocalyptic period as crucial to the growth of this concept all but unknown to earlier Israelite faith.

Although it is true that as regards earthly government the Hasidim and later the Pharisees[1] were not as thoroughly mythic in their thinking as the ancient prophets (they did not oppose the monarchy simply because it was human and historical, as had Amos, Hosea, and Jeremiah). At no time did they view the Hasmoneans as anything but a temporary expedient. The book of Maccabees itself, largely friendly toward the monarchy reflects popular reserve even at the moment of the Maccabeans' greatest success. We are told that all the people desired the Hasmonean Simon to be their "leader and high priest for ever, until a faithful prophet should arise" (I Macc. 14:41). Scholars seem to have missed the plain contradiction in this sentence.[2] One is either made king for ever, or one is not. What the people seem to be saying here is that the remarkable successes of the dynasty had led them to accept its temporal rule although no Divine sanction was implied by this action. Furthermore, these arrangements were strictly tentative, pending the authentic revelation of God's will by means of some one who, unlike the Hasmoneans, would be capable of expounding it. As we have seen, even this limited popular support evaporated once the dynasty broke with the Pharisees and ceased to be protectors of the Laws of the mythic Kingdom.[1]

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[1] A brief yet comprehensive study of the growth of the Pharisee movement and its world view out of the scribal traditions is available in Leo Baeck, The Pharisees and Other Essays (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), pp. 3-50. Baeck correctly views the Hasidim and the Pharisees as arising from the same scribal sources but fails to distinguish between the former and the Maccabees with whom they struck a strictly tentative and temporary alliance.

For a frank and frustrating review of the myriad problems and uncertainties surround the identity of the Pharisees, see John Bowker, Jesus and the Pharisees (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 1-38. One would like to believe that the difficulties could not possibly be as overwhelming as Bowker suggests.

[2] R. H. Charles' uncritical acceptance of the claim that Simon was the forcus of messianic hopes is astonishing. He actually reproduces Simon's title of "ruler and high priest for ever" without the crucial qualification, "until" etc.! Although I Macc. 14 does characterize Simon's rule as flled with peace and joy, his military and political activities are described in matter-of-fact historical terms with no messianic overtones. No mythic references are made to Simon's person nor is he ever referred to as the Messiah. D. S. Russell is quite right to reject the alleged identification of Simon as Messiah either in I Macc. or in the so-called Simeon acrostic of Ps. 110. See R. H. Charles, Religious Development Between the Old and New Testaments (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1915 [?]), pp. 78-79; Russell, pp. 310-11. Interestingly, in what appears to be an earlier version of this work, Russell seems more inclined to credit the claims of Charles as regards Simon. See D. S. Russell, Between the Testaments (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 123. To our mind, there is no credible evidence whatever that anyone at any time considered the Hasmoneans in a messianic light. The dynasty itself made so such claims. How much

Mythicizing Time

With the return of Israel to political subjection under the Romans, the myth once again became the only available self-definition for Jewry. As in the days immediately following the fall of the Davidic

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less those who, imbued with the apocalyptic spirit of Daniel looked to a messianic advent in a mythic realm totally removed from the historical arena of national politics.

[1] As we have already noted, the king then joined himself to the party of the Sadducees, the priestly aristocracy whose outlook appears to have been largely one of political and social reaction. However, it would be an injustice to accept the view of most scholars that the Sadducees were simple opportunists without religious convictions. Their attachment to the Temple as the central and essential point of contact between earth and heaven (probably on the Deuteronomistic model) was quite genuine. Their disappearance with that of the Temple in 70 C.E. would indicate as much. The great failing ot the Sadducees was a narrowness of vision rather than a shallowness of conviction. Their religion, sincere as it may have been, seems to have been exclusively cultic with little influence over the other spheres of life. Thus they could plunge into the political arena without violating their limited, Temple-centered faith. Their lack of an overall mythic vision led them to be caught up in historical affairs so as to become eventually little more than a political movement. Thus in moving from the Pharisee to the Sadducee camp, the Hasmonean monarchy was revealing its true nature as an earthly-historical dynasty whose political world view was akin to that of the Sadducees, but a world away from the mythic reality in which the Pharisees lived. Standard treatments of the Sadducees can be found in Bo Reicke, The New Testament Era (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), pp. 152-56, and Emil Schurer, The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), pp. 75-78.

kingdom five centuries earlier, spokesmen for the Kingdom immediately moved to co-opt the categories of thought which the Hasmoneans had attempted to historicize. In so doing, they continued the work of Daniel and ushered in the great age of Jewish apocalyptic--the apotheosis of the messianic speculation so long the dominant expression of Israel's future hope. We cannot here attempt anything approaching a complete overview of the vast and varied apocalyptic literature of this period. Our study will confine itself to selected citations from this material sufficient to support our contention that in apocalyptic the myth of the Divine Kingdom to come reasserted itself in reaction to the failure of historical categories to adequately express this essential theme of Israelite faith.

The anti-historical thrust of apocalyptic is most strikingly revealed in its co-option of time itself into a supratemporal mythic totality. The use of pseudonyms by so many of the writers indicates a non-historical outlook in which liberation from the limitations of human temporality is central. By envisioning a future which is about to become present in the name of a seer of the distant past, the apocalyptic authors confuse and ultimately suspend the historical categories of past, present, and future.[1]

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[1] Alternative views as to the reasons for the pseudonymity of so many apocalyptic books can be found in Russell, Method and Message, pp. 127-39, where the time factor is mentioned, but in terms of a sense of contemporaneity between the apocalyptic author and the particular seer in whose name he wrote, which is to see the issue as psychological rather than mythic and cosmological; and H. H. Rowley, The Relevance of Apocalyptic (New York: Association Press, 1964), pp. 39-42, who proposes the surprising theory that all the later pseudonymous apocalyptic writers "woodenly copied" the practice of the author of Daniel without understanding or any purpose other than the desire to be "esoteric." And we confess to a total inability to make sense of Rowley's "explanation" of why the Daniel author adopted a pseudonym in the first place. R. H. Charles' matter-of-fact solution to the question (Charles, p. 45) should not be overlooked.

> . . . Enoch a righteous man, whose eyes were opened by God, saw the vision of the Holy One in the heavens, which the angels showed me, and from them I heard everything, and from them I understood as I saw, but not for this generation, but for a remote one which is for to come.
>
> (I Enoch 1:2)

Here in the opening passages of the book of Enoch, we have many of the central elements of apocalyptic: visionary experience, angels, revelation of Divine secrets, prophecy of the distant future.[1] But for apocalyptic, the future reveals the meaning of past and present, thus catching up all three moments in an eternal scheme in which time itself becomes unreal, having been rendered transparent by the revelation of the supratemporal Divine realm which shines through it from beyond, within and behind. God's purposes have been made clear to the author, and as those purposes are eternal and unchanging, Enoch who had been taken up into the Divine Presence ages before (Gen. 5:24) must also have known of them.

The apocalyptic abolition of historic time continues in this literature's pre-occupation with temporal schematization. Characteristically the world's history is divided into segments, ages of varying or equal length in which the very neatness and artificiality of the arrangement reveal the total mythic heteronomy of time itself. All is planned--all is controlled by God--all is expressive of his eternal ordering of the creation.[2] In the famous Apocalypse of

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[1] Distant, that is, for the ancient seer in whose name the vision is being described; the actual author of the text believed the ultimate fulfillment to be near at hand.

[2] At this point the question of human freedom becomes paramount. Most scholars of the apocalyptic movement would appear to hold that the view of events in this literature is deterministic. Schmithals (p. 129) refers to "the deterministic view of history held by apocalyptic, with its assumption of fixed times and eras . . ." Frost agrees (p. 20), "the apocalyptists, then, are thorough-going determinists." Russell qualifies these categorical views in a detailed discussion of citations

Weeks, I Enoch divides all time into ten weeks or ages of history:

> And Enoch began to recount from the books and said:
> I was born the seventh in the first week,
> while judgment and righteousness still endured.
> And after me there shall arise in the second week great wickedness, . . .
> And after that in the third week, at its close
> A man shall be elected as the plant of righteous judgment, . . .
> And after that in the fourth week, at its close,
> Visions of the holy and righteous shall be seen, . . .
> And after that in the fifth week, at its close.
> The house of glory and dominion shall be built forever, . . .
> And after that in the sixth week all who live in it shall
> be blinded, . . .
> And after that in the seventh week shall an apostate generation
> arise, . . .
> And after that there shall be another, the eighth week, that of
> righteousness, . . .
> And after that, in the ninth week, the righteous judgment shall be
> revealed to the world, . . .
> And after this, in the tenth week . . . the great eternal judgment.[1]
> (I Enoch 93:3-9, 91:12-15)

According to R. H. Charles, the ten weeks are the ages of 1) the antediluvian period, 2) the Flood, 3) Abraham, 4) Moses, 5) the Temple, 6) the Babylonian captivity, 7) the post-exilic period, 8) the Messianic Kingdom, 9) the conversion of the gentiles, and 10) the destruction of the world.[2] All this is followed by the seventh part of the

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from the literature in which human freedom is affirmed (Method and Message, pp. 230-34). He concludes, "Man's action, then, may help to determine the events of history in its temporal and eternal aspects; but the whole time-process is both determined and unified by the working out of God's eternal plan" (p. 234). We can agree with Russell without giving up our contention that in apocalyptic, as in all mythic world-views, man is heteronomous in that he depends for the meaning of his life on a mythic, Divine reality beyond himself. His essential humanity is, thus, not identified with his freedom, such as it is (as would be the case under a conception of man as autonomous), but with his obedience in falling in with the Divine plan revealed in the apocalyptic vision. He will be part of it whether he will or no, but he can choose either to resist or to facilitate the inevitable.

[1] Other such schematizations of time are found in Daniel 9 (the famous seventy weeks of years); I Enoch 1-36 (seventy generations); Test. of Levi 16-17 (again, seventy weeks of years); and in various places in the later apocalyptic writings. A rather dry but comprehensive history of these references including some very interesting and valuable citations of a simlar nature from rabbinic sources is given in James Drummond, The Jewish Messiah (London: Longman's Green, and Co., 1877), pp. 200-208.

[2] R. H. Charles, The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old

tenth week in which,

> . . . the first heaven shall depart and pass away,
> And a new heaven shall appear, . . .
> And after that there shall be many weeks without number
> for ever, . . .[1]
>
> (I Enoch 91:16-17)

All the historical dynamic, movement, and excitement are here, and more; but this is not history. Rather the ages of man have become segments of a mythic, eternal pattern in which all is planned (and thus can be revealed) beforehand. The writer stands at the end of the "seventh week" and yet the last three weeks are as clear to him as the first seven had been to Enoch. Thus historical man and historical time are revealed as illusory. This is the ultimate revelation of the apocalyptic vision.

Testament (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 263-64.

[1] The grouping of the ten weeks under a "first" category to be superceded by the advent of the "new" expresses another common theme of apocalyptic (and for that matter, rabbinic) thought: the two ages or worlds. Thus for Enoch, the messianic kingdom and the conversion of the world (weeks 8 and 9, if Charles is correct) will be the climax of this age, while beyond it (following its destruction in week 10) lies the final mythic projection of a "new heaven." Enoch pictures this landscape not at all, stating only that "the powers of the heavens shall give sevenfold light" (91:16). This blinding light seems to overwhelm his sight, for here the vision ends. So much for spatial description; and, as he goes on to say, the weeks in that new heaven are "without number for ever" (91:17), thus making temporal calculation impossible. The writer has deliberately drawn us beyond the realms of time and space and thus beyond the bounds of possible human experience as we presently know it. We have reached the ultimate--the realm of pure light. "Whereof we cannot speak, thereof let us be silent." An interesting treatment of time and space in Hebrew thought is found in Thorleif Bowman, Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1960), pp. 123-67.

Mythicizing Monarchy and Priesthood

We have said that in abolishing time apocalyptic stresses the eternal Kingdom of God behind temporal appearances. But the ultimate disclosure of the fullness of the Kingdom is always set in the future. Thus, with all its eternal consciousness, apocalyptic retains a powerful temporal thrust, not in time, but through it and beyond it into a mythic age to come in which time itself will cease. The defeat of the illusory and/or evil forces of history will be the last act of the universal drama. The agent of this Divine purpose is usually seen in messianic terms.[1]

> And after these things shall a star arise to you from Jacob in peace,
> And a man ["sceptre" in Hebrew] shall arise [from my seed],
> like the sun of righteousness, . . .
> And no sin shall be found in him . . .
> Then shall the sceptre of my kingdom shine forth, . . .
> To judge and save all that call upon the Lord.
> (Test. of Jud. 24:1-6).

This prophecy of a sinless Davidic Messiah who will be apocalyptic judge and redeemer is an enlargement on the apocalyptic ruler of Daniel 7. There, of course, the superhuman figure was called "one like a son of man," but the messianic thrust of the reference is not diminished by the use of another name. Indeed, the technical term, "Messiah," is found nowhere in the messianic passages of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But the Davidic prince of the future is envisioned clearly enough to render the term unnecessary. By the apocalyptic period, the vision had been so inflated and supernaturalized that the only difference between the strictly messianic passages and those referring to "the son of man" is in regard to Davidic descent.[1]

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[1] This does not mean that the ultimate vision of apocalyptic is always of a personal Messiah figure. Often, as in Deutero-Isaiah and Zechariah (discussed above) it is God Himself Who will rule without (or following) the Messiah who acts as personification of His various powers. What is crucial is the ideal projection of the Kingdom to come, a new age in which God's rule will be all in all. For a comprehensive discussion of the passages in which the Kingdom is not personified in a Messiah, see Drummond, pp. 226-73. A good general statement on this issue is found in Frost, p. 57.

> And he shall be a righteous king, taught of God, over them,
> And there shall be no unrighteousness in his days . . .
> For all shall be holy and their king the anointed ["Messiah" in Hebrew] of the Lord . . .
> He will rebuke rulers, and remove sinners by the might of his word; . . .
>
> (Ps. of Sol. 17:35-36, 41)

> And he sat on the throne of his glory,
> And the sum of judgment was given unto the Son of Man,
> And he caused the sinners to pass away and be destroyed from off the face of the earth, . . .
>
> (I Enoch 69:27)

It would be no exaggeration to say that these apocalyptic messianic figures--whether called "Messiah," "king," "son of man," or one of the several other titles of this genre--represent both the Divine possibility of man and the human face of God. The "one like a son of man" in Daniel 7:13 has in Enoch become simply "the son of man." The strictly human name given to Ezekiel (Ez. 2:1) is now used to designate a figure possessing all the qualities of the strictly Divine being Ezekiel saw seated on the saphire throne (Ez. 1:26-28). The name of man has become the name of God's redeemer and judge.[1] Or, more precisely, God's powers of rulership, redemption, and judgment have been hypostatized in the Divine-human image of the Messiah-Son of Man. Surely we have in these great visions the apotheosis of the messianic idea and, in a larger sense, of the human itself as image of God in the Kingdom which is to come.

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[1] The question of the relationship between the "Son of Man" and the "Messiah" concepts has been the cause of lively debate among scholars. First of all, as regards the origins of the two ideas, we have already traced the development of messianism from Jeremiah onward. As the provenance of the Son of Man is non-Israelite the issue is beyond the scope of this study and need not detain us here. The interested reader is referred to what we consider the definitive discussion of this subject in Sigmund Mowinckel, He That Cometh (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), pp. 346-450 (esp. pp. 420-37).

Our concern here is whether or not the "Son of Man' can be identified as "the Messiah." We believe that despite the vastly divergent origins of the two ideas, by the apocalyptic period, they had come to perform virtually identical functions. In this we agree with Albright, Stone Age, p. 379; Mowinckel, He That Cometh, pp. 360-62; and Frost, p. 252. Rowley, p. 32, disagrees as does Drummond, p. 284. Charles, Religious Development, pp. 85-89, identifies the Son of Man as a particular conception of the Messiah while Russell, Method and Message, pp. 331-34, agrees but places much greater stress on the distinction to be drawn between the two figures. Again, our concern is strictly functional and we hold that the textual evidence cited immediately below in our text together with II Esdras 13 and II Baruch in at least six separate passages support our view that we are dealing here with two names functioning as personifications of the Divine Kingdom to come.

One additional aspect of apocalyptic messianism should be mentioned. We have held that the figure of the Messiah represented both in post-Davidic and post-Maccabean literature a mythic co-option of an historical idea of earthly monarchy. But the Hasmonean monarchy had been unlike the Davidic in its Levitical origins and its consequent uniting of kingship and priesthood in one political-sacerdotal ruler. If the post-Maccabean apocalyptic sought to swallow up into myth all aspects of the historical monarchy which had come to such a bad end, it had, perforce, to perform its work of redemption-through-mythic-reinterpretation on the priestly as well as the monarchical claims of the Hasmoneans. This it did by developing the singular doctrine of the Levitical Messiah, the priestly redeemer of the future Divine dispensation.

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[1] The concept of the messianic figure as judge is crucial in apocalyptic literature and, we believe, provides a connective element binding the Law as Kingdom present to the Messiah as Kingdom to come. As we have already observed, the Kingdom of the future will entail the universal application of God's Law already present in Israel as Torah. As judge the Messiah acts as human-Divine symbol of the idea that Law necessarily involves both God and man in intimate inter-relationship. One scholar at least views the idea of the messianic last judgment as Jewish apocalyptic's unique contribution to the moral conscience of mankind. F. Crawford Burkitt, Jewish and Christian Apocalypses (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), p. 3.

An examination of this idea does not, as might at first appear, take us beyond our topic of the Kingdom, since, as will be immediately apparent, the Levitical Messiah possesses all the qualities of royalty.

> Then shall the Lord raise up a new priest
> And to him all the words of the Lord shall be revealed;
> And he shall execute a righteous judgment upon the earth . . .
> And his star shall rise in heaven as of a king . . .
> In his priesthood shall sin come to an end,
> And the lawless shall cease to do evil.
> (Test. of Levi 17:2-3, 9)[1]

The claim that this passage dates from the early Hasmonean period and expresses messianic hopes for that house is, to our mind, totally wrongheaded.[2] On the contrary, although the historical model upon which the vision is based is certainly the priest-kings of the Maccabean dynasty, we have here the presentation of an anti-historical mythic alternative to the earthly reality.[3] The priesthood in its ideal form was the proper type of government for the mythic Kingdom present. But since the days of Jason it had become a political office with decreasing religious impact on the lives of the people. This historicizing of what had been a central element of the present myth led to a re-location of the priesthood in the Kingdom to come, a world into which political intrigue and corruption could not enter to soil the sacred institution.

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[1] See also Jub. 31:13-15 and Test. of Reub. 6:5-12.

[2] One can only wonder at R. H. Charles' insistence that this passage was written in honor of John Hyrcanus who came to the Hasmonean throne in 135 B.C.E. He never seemed to tire of pressing this particular case:

> "Around the various members of this [Hasmonean] family *everything that is noble in the Jewish history of the second century revolves*. Is it a matter for wonder, then, that the zealous Jews, who were looking for the speedy advent of the kingdom of God, thought that the Messiah himself was to spring from this family?" (R. H. Charles, *Religious Development*, p. 80; emphasis mine).

The only "cause for wonder" is Charles' ability to write these words, which frankly left us gasping in disbelief at the first reading. "Everything that is noble . . ."!?! Without rehearsing the checkered careers of the Hasmoneans, we will simply say that Charles ought certainly to have been able to praise the undeniable military valor and political sagacity of the Maccabeans without denigrating the glorious spiritual and intellectual accomplishments of the non-political writers, teachers, and visionaries of Israel in the second century B.C.E.

[3] H. H. Rowley, *Jewish Apocalyptic and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: The Athlone Press, 1957), pp. 12-13, who holds, correctly, that the passage is not speaking of a Hasmonean Messiah goes on to state that "it is possible that the author idealized a conception which was based on what had been done by the Hasmoneans." He should have added that by idealizing (in our term, mythicizing) the priesthood the author was rejecting rather than exalting the historical uses to which the

The people could not wholly reject the earthly priesthood as they had the earthly monarchy. That would have involved rejection of the Temple, a formal step which for post-exilic Judaism would have been impossible. No one was to suggest such a thing until Jesus of Nazareth, with an insight and courage unknown since Jeremiah, dared to articulate a truth that had lurked just below the consciousness of Torah-centered Judaism: that the faith of Israel, in plumbing the depth of the human soul and scaling the heights of the Divine intellect, had long since transcended the form of worship practiced in the Temple.[1] But, until that moment of liberating self-understanding, the most advanced minds

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Hasmoneans had put it. The dialectical pattern is crucial for understanding apocalyptic in its proper relationship of dependence on and reaction against the Maccabean experience.

[1] This is the meaning of Jesus' violent conduct in the Temple courtyard (Mark 11:15-19). He was aware that in disrupting the activities of the dealers in sacrificial animals and Temple coinage, he was striking at procedures necessary for the continuation of the cult. For his part, the high priest was quite correct in viewing Jesus as a threat to the perpetuation of rituals considered by the Sadducees to be the essential link between earth and heaven. In suggesting that the Temple should be "a house of prayer" (v. 17) Jesus is extolling a Pharisaic practice, after implying by his disruptive behavior a rejection of the Sadducee practice of animal sacrifice. He may just possibly be hinting that the Temple become, in effect, a synagogue. In any case, Jesus was the first to state openly what must have been the unspoken content of many hearts among his fellow Pharisees of more orthodox leanings.

of Judaism, whether Pharisaic or apocalyptic[1] could only re-direct the attention of the faithful away from the Temple priesthood and toward the true Kingdom present (Torah) and to come (Messiah). It is as part of this apocalyptic attempt to mythicize the priesthood long degraded by historical realities that the unfamiliar figure of the Levitical Messiah must be seen. With the fading from memory of the unpleasant aspects of the Hasmonean priesthood-monarchy and the eclipse of the priesthood itself with the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., the image of the Levitical Messiah passed from the Jewish religious imagination.[2]

But for the more traditional idea of the Davidic Messiah, the apocalyptic movement of the immediate post-Biblical period meant new life, albeit in an inflated supernatural form, and a permanent role as principal bearer of the myth of the Kingdom to come, the great Jewish metaphor for a future pregnant with human and Divine possibilities.

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[1] Or both. As we have stated, there was a frequent overlap.

[2] Interestingly, Levitical messianism took root in two heterodox Jewish sects, the Essenes and the Christians. The former developed the singular doctrine of twin Messiahs of the lines of Aaron and Israel (Manual of Discipline 9:11; The Zadokite Document 12:23, 14:19, 19:10, 20:1), the latter combined the two themes in one man who was seen as both Davidic Messiah and High Priest (see the book of Hebrews, passim). Pursuit of either of these fascinating sects will take us beyond the scope of this study. The interested reader will find valuable material on these topics in Oscar Cullmann, _The Christology of the New Testament_ (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1975), pp. 83-136, and George A. Riggan, _Messianic Theology and Christian Faith_ (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967), pp. 135-47, 170-71.

2. Talmud: The Apotheosis of the Torah Myth

The Growth of the Tradition

With the coming of Ezra, Israel's formal existence as the mythic Kingdom of God present in the midst of history received its definitive content. Torah[1] became the constitution of God's Kingdom

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[1] In the previous chapters we have often referred to the Torah simply as "the Law." We have done so because it was this legal aspect of the work that was, of necessity, stressed by Ezra in confronting a Jerusalem community desperately in need of religious structure and guidance. In that all human life is characterized by this ongoing need, the legal understanding of Torah has remained an essential element of the Jewish faith. Despite the objections of the childish and thoughtless to what appears to them to be a restrictive system of dry legalism, the Law offers man the possibility of liberation from his less than admirable inclinations. Some years ago, a leading psychoanalyst, Dr. Mortimer Ostow, chairman of the Department of Pastoral Psychiatry at the Jewish Theological Seminary, told me that the essence of religion could be summed up in one admonition: "Don't do what you want to do; do what I [God] tell you to do!" In so saying, the Doctor was reflecting his own Freudian background. In 1930 Freud had written:

> "Sublimation of instinct is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development; it is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life. . . . it is impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts" (Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents [New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1962], p. 44).

I replied at the time that the Doctor's formulation might be correct in locating the starting point of ethical religion, but that the higher religious life begins at the more advanced point at which what God wants us to do and what we want to do become one. But, since a glance out at human society or into our own hearts is sufficient to demonstrate that for the mass of humanity, this advanced point is rarely, if ever, reached, one is thrown back upon the Law as the only possible vehicle of civilized life. Yeats was correct when he said that "measurement began our might" (William Butler Yeats, Collected Poems [New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964], p. 342). Without the imposition of form, structure, and order on our natural existence, man is helpless before the forces of the inhuman within and without. It is Judaism's great insight to have understood this and through Law to have provided its adherents with a religious system in which every activity of life becomes a training exercise in the practice of the human--the ordering, structuring activity which frees us from the tyranny of instinct. But Law is more than an imposition of order on the self; it extends its reach out into the world of objects, transforming them into intimations of the eternal. For Judaism, every on earth, the "desirable instrument" by means of which human existence might become the living expression of the Divine will. Torah--at once revelation and way of life--was seen as the eternal and indispensable link between heaven and earth, God and man, King and subject. As such, it became the focus of Israel's faith which was re-formed by Ezra into an ongoing activity of translating Torah as revelation into Torah as way of life.

The interpretive role of the Levites first mentioned in the description of Ezra's great Torah assembly and public reading (Neh. 8:8) became the essential religious function of the leadership of the newly emergent Judaism. This class of interpreters or scribes (sopherim) may originally have been drawn exclusively from the Levitical families, but it soon became obvious that what was required of a scribe was creative intelligence and willingness to innovate by breaking new ground in the application of Torah to everyday life. The former quality--intelligence--was hardly limited to the hereditary priesthood;

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moment of time, every object in space is pregnant with Divine implications. Some years ago, following a sermon on the Jewish dietary laws, I was asked by a young listener what Judaism had against ham sandwiches. I replied that not only does Judaism have nothing against ham sandwiches, it has exalted ham to the level of the religiously sublime. By saying no to the ham sandwich, for no other reason than that God has so commanded him, the Jew makes of this prosaic object an occasion for God-consciousness, a vehicle for contact with the Divine order bestowed upon the world by a loving Father. This double purpose of imposing a sacred order on life and directing man's attention toward Him Who orders the universe, runs through the entire Jewish legal corpus of 613 commandments and is the inner meaning of Torah as Law.

But of course Torah is even more than Law (Halakah); thus the use of these terms as synonymous can be misleading. Torah is the story (aggadah) of the ongoing relationship of a King and His subjects, Lover and beloved, Creator and creature, God and man. It was this Word of the Lord revealing to man who and what he is and who and what he can be with and through God that was the priceless treasure brought to Israel by Ezra.

while the latter quality--opennes to the new--was to be found least of all among those wedded by descent and employment to the perpetuation of an ancient Temple cult.[1] For these reasons, the scribal and priestly classes steadily diverged from each other during the post-Ezra period.

The scribes became the representatives of popular religion, a democratic force seeking universal education in Torah for all Israel. This development was an outgrowth of the nature of Torah itself. This Book which had been given by God to His people was the inheritance of all Jews, not the property of any one class. In it God revealed to every Jewish soul that he had been Divinely chosen to be a subject of the Kingdom. What God desired was for each individual to respond to this calling according to the King's own guidelines spelled out in the Torah itself. Thus each man must familiarize himself with the text so as to be capable of responding properly to the Divine call. But, the individual was not the ultimate category in which the Torah conceived of man. It was to Israel as a communal whole, a corporate personality, that God had spoken; thus, it was as Israel that the response must be given. The obscurities, uncertainties, and seeming contradictions of the text must be explained and reconciled so that Israel's response to God might be as uniform and compelling as had been the revelation itself. Hence the necessity for the most talented minds of the community to devote themselves to the all-important task of interpretation of the Divine calling and standardization of the human response.[1]

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[1] This is not to say that there was no priestly input into the developing tradition of legal interpretation. However, early on we find a growing reluctance on the part of the priestly circles to accept the oral Law as authoritative and binding. We have already traced the growing isolation of the priests and their increasingly narrow focus on Temple ritual, which enabled the non-hereditary scribal schools to gain an ever greater hold over the people.

It is really an overstatement to say that the priests resisted all change and development. As we have already seen, they were in the forefront of the pro-Hellenistic circles of the Jersualem aristocracy. As such they were willing to accept fundamental reforms which were anathema to the scribes. However, these reforms as originally conceived posed no threat to the hereditary priesthood. They may have altered the conception of the God served in the Temple cult, but in so doing they centered the religion all the more around that cult and its priestly practitioners. On the other hand, the growing power over the popular mind exercised by the scribal interpreters of the Torah threatened to establish a rival power center as alternative to the Temple hierarchy. It was this type of innovation that the priests could not accept. Thus they were led by the simple requirements of group self-preservation into a position of reaction exemplified in the Sadducee movement. See Alexander Guttmann, Rabbinic Judaism in the Making (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), pp. 124-76.

The interpretive work, begun in the days of Ezra, continued down through the ages of the men of the Great Synagogue, the scribes of the Sanhedrin, and the party of the Pharisees. Over a period of hundreds of years, a tradition of oral commentary and interpretation attached itself to the Torah text. During these centuries Israel was ruled by Persians and Greeks, rose and fell as an independent nation, came under Roman rule, endured puppet kings and foreign procurators and experienced persecution, revolution, disastrous warfare, and final destruction of the Temple itself. But, of all these cataclysmic events the oral tradition said virtually nothing. So unhistoric was its outlook, so completely mythic its concerns that this vast living body of tradition could devote long and passionate debates to an issue of proper Sabbath observance while totally ignoring the rise and fall of nations. Where apocalyptic mythicized history, the oral tradition simply ignored it.

But the oral tradition, in all its vastness, could not forever remain unrecorded. The advantage of not reducing this material to writing was clearly that in its oral state it remained open to revision and reinterpretation so as to make the Torah capable of being applied anew as conditions changed in the Jewish environment.[1] But with the rapid growth of the volume of traditional lore, the need to set it down in writing was also felt. The first step in the movement from oral to written interpretation may well have been the development by Hillel of formal rules of scriptural interpretation. This great Pharisee of the first century C.E. founded a school of Tannaïm (Teachers) in Judah and established seven logical principles by which Torah could be applied to the everyday life of the Jew. Therefore, even if the oral tradition as it existed to that time was set down in writing, the interpretive rules of Hillel might still be applied to new situations, thus preventing the reduction of a living tradition to a dead letter.[2]

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[1] For a comprehensive review of the dominant thought patterns which produced the Talmud, see Gerson D. Cohen, "The Talmudic Age," in *Great Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People*, ed. Leo W. Schwarz (New York: Random House, Inc., 1956), pp. 143-214.

Hillel's greatest student was Jochanan ben Zakkai, the leading Pharisee at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E. Legend has it that during the prolonged siege of the holy city, ben Zakkai had himself smuggled out of Jerusalem in a coffin and brought into the Roman camp. Appearing before the enemy commander, the rabbi begged him to spare, not Jerusalem, but the town of Yavneh and its great

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[1] The Oral Law is analyzed with great insight and sensitivity in Morris Adler, The World of the Talmud (New York: Schocken Books, 1963); see especially his discussion of the reasons for the rabbinic resistance to the reduction of the tradition to writing, pp. 19-34.

[2] Hillel's seven principles were, of course, only a first step in the formal development of logical categories of Talmudic thought. For a solid introduction to Hillel and his contribution to the oral tradition, see Guttmann, pp. 59-125. An exhaustive overview of the growth of logical principles of Talmudic exegesis is available in Z. H. Chajes, The Student's Guide through the Talmud (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1960).

Torah authorities. The Roman agreed (Git., 56b). Thus, ben Zakkai had insured the perpetuation of Judaism and Torah as the content of the mythic Kingdom present even before the destruction of the Temple and the holy city. The rabbinic tradition flourished in the new communal center at Yavneh following the war in which Jerusalem was reduced to a burned out ruin.[1]

Generations of sages succeeded to the leadership of the Torah community Israel had now become and, finally, under the guidance of Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi ("the patriarch") the essence of the tradition was compiled and set down at the end of the second century C.E. This collection, known as the Mishnah (meaning, "that which is repeated," i.e., the oral law which has thus far been trasmitted by repetition). In addition to the six sections divided into sixty-three tractates which make up the Mishnah, there is additional material of a similar nature grouped under the titles of Tosefta ("supplement") and Baraita ("external" [texts]).

The Mishnah is a commentary on the Torah.[2] But, as the interpretive tradition continued, a vast body of material was collected consisting of rabbinic discussions of the Mishnah. These materials were eventually recorded in the Gemara ("completion" [of the Mishnah]) of

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[1] Cohen is correct in stating that Yavneh "became the center of Jewish life and thought [and] replaced the Holy City as the seat of the Sanhedrin and virtually . . . the new capital" (Boas Cohen, Everyman's Talmud [New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1949], p. xxiv).

[2] It would be more correct to say that the Mishnah is a separate body of Law loosely based on interpretation of Torah, but of a semi-independent character far removed from the earlier line-by-line rabbinic commentaries on the ancient text. See Herbert Danby, The Mishnah (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. xiii-xxxii.

Palestine (completed at the end of the fourth century C.E.) and that of Babylon (completed in 499 C.E.). The Mishnah plus the Gemara is known as the Talmud. Additonal rabbinic material originating in the Talmudic period is found in various collections including Midrash Rabbah, Michilta, Sifra and Sifre which contain valuable commentaries on various books of the Bible revealing many of the dominant thought patters of the age.[1]

The Content of the Mythic Kingdom Present

It is in this Talmudic literature that the work of Ezra is brought to its mythic apotheosis in a cosmic vision of Torah as pattern of creation and meaning of all life. The inspiration for the Talmudic exaltation of Torah seems to come from the wisdom literature of the late Biblical period. Under steadily growing Greek cultural influence, Judah in the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. began to produce a literary genre in which wisdom appeared both as the essential quality of God and as a separate entity, hypostatized and personified (usually as female) as something approaching the Lord's Divine consort.[2] Wisdom speaks in Proverbs, chapter 8:

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[1] There are, of course, additional collections which can be grouped under the title, "Talmudic literature." We have mentioned here only those to which we will refer below. A complete listing and brief discussion of all such material can be found in John Bowker, The Targums and Rabbinic Literature (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 40-92, and in Hermann L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1931), passim.

[2] Even a brief discussion of wisdom literature would lead us far from our topic. For those seeking a detailed analysis of this genre, we recommend: Gerhard von Rad, Wisdom in Israel (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974); R. B. Y. Scott, The Way of Wisdom (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971); J. Coert Rylaarsdam, Revelation in Jewish Wisdom Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974); and the remarkably broad-based cultural analysis of O. S. Rankin, Israel's Wisdom Literature (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

> The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
>   the first of his acts of old.
> Ages ago I was set up,
>   at the first, before the beginning of the earth. . . .
> When he established the heavens, I was there, . . .
> when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
>   then I was beside him, like a master workman;
> and I was daily his delight,
>   rejoicing before him always, . . .
> (Prov. 8:22-23, 27, 29-30)

For the Talmudic commentators, there was no doubt but that the wisdom here personified was one with Torah.[1] Commenting and elaborating on the passage above, Midrash Rabbah states, "As a king employs an architect when he proposes to build a palace, and looks into his plans and designs to know where the various recesses and chambers shall be placed, did God look into the Torah when he was about to create the world" (Gen. R., I). Thus the Torah becomes the basis of cosmic order itself, the pattern of God's visible Kingdom. Further, Torah sustains the world daily. "Were it not for Torah, the heavens and earth could not endure . . ." (Pes. 68b). Torah is the daughter of God, the heavenly bride given to Israel at Sinai (Exod. R., 30:5, 33:7). When Torah was bestowed by God upon His people, the universe paused and the angels ceased their eternal singing to listen to the Divine words (Exod. R., 29:8).

In revealing the Torah, then, God opened to Israel the plan by which He directs His Kingdom. "Beloved are Israel, for unto them was given the desirable instrument (i.e., Torah) . . . through which the world was created" (Avot 3:18). The Torah was viewed as the total disclosure of the Divine order and purpose for the world. All was revealed; nothing held back by God (Deut. R., 8:6). That the Torah is the content of the Kingdom present was made clear by the rabbis. God speaks: "You have received my kingdom in love." "Yes, Yes," responds Israel. To which God replies, "If you have received my kingdom, you receive now my decrees [i.e., the Laws of Torah]" (Sifra 85 d; Mech., 67, a-b).

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[1] Solomon Schecter, Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), p. 127. We are indebted to Schecter for the translations of many of the Talmudic passages cited below; others are from Cohen or are our own.

If Torah revealed the secrets of the Kingdom, then man's life could be spent in no loftier occupation than study and practice of its teachings. "Lessen your toil for worldly goods and be busy in the Torah" (Avot 4:12). And again, "Turn it [Torah], turn it, for every thing is in it; contemplate it; grow grey and old over it; move not away from it. You can have no greater glory than this" (Avot 5:25). Although Torah is the eternal pattern of the world, as Law it could not come into full effect until God's Kingdom was established, and that was impossible until man was created. "When the Holy One, blessed be he, consulted the Torah as to the creation of the world, she answered, 'Master of the world, if there be no host, over whom will the king reign, and if there be no peoples praising him, where is the glory of the king?' The Lord of the world heard the answer and it pleased him" (Pirke Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 3). Here Torah appears as Divine logic hypostatized and personified over against Divine feeling or emotion ("it pleased him") which remains internal to God. Through Torah, then, man's existence is seen as necessary to God's Kingship. Perhaps Torah can be seen here as the human expression of God and the Divine understanding of man. Through Torah God and man meet, reach out to each other and share their lives. This life in which God and man are inextricably bound up is the life of Torah, the Kingdom present.

We said that Talmudic literature ignored history. That is quite true, with the exception of several instances in which historical events are mentioned but never in specific terms and always in thoroughly mythicized form.

> Had Israel looked properly into the words of the Torah that were revealed to them, no nation would have ever gained dominion over them. And what did she [Torah] say unto them? "Receive upon yourselves the yoke of the kingdom in my name; outweigh each other in the fear of heaven, and let your conduct be mutual lovingkindness."
>
> (Sifre, 138a)

Here the Kingdom of God is explicitly identified as the Kingdom of Torah ("my name") and further specificed in terms of piety and love expressed in daily living. This application of cosmic principles to individual conduct is the heart of Talmud as explication of the Kingdom whose content and structure are found in Torah.

Torah located the Kingdom present in the temporal and spatial dimensions of this world. It acted as a balance to the other-worldliness of apocalyptic which sought the Kingdom future in a realm radically discontinuous with life as it is lived on this earth. The remarkable quality of the Torah-centered life was what might be called its otherworldly worldliness--its participation in the common activities of everyday existence, but always seeing that existence in terms of transcendent definitions. Torah did not call its adherents away from this world into another; it was not "other-worldly" in that sense. What it did was to reveal that this world was "other" than man had supposed--that Divine Law was its very structure, its inner essence and that by ordering one's life by means of Torah, one could live in harmony with the heart beat of the universe itself, coming to see with the newly awakened Jacob, that "the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. . . . How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:16-17).

It is important to bear in mind that while rabbinic literature is clearly creative and innovative, advancing far beyond the thought-world of the period of Ezra, the rabbis themselves denied that they were doing or saying anything new. They looked to Moses, of course, rather than Ezra as the receptor of Torah on behalf of Israel. The myth, naturally, required that if the Torah was eternal, so must its proper interpretation be. The thought that freely working human minds were responsible for the ongoing rabbinic tradition would have smacked of that human autonomy so opposed to the mythic spirit. The term "Torah" in its largest sense means teaching and includes prophets, hagiographa, and Talmud as containing the full measure of revelation all disclosed to Moses on Sinai. As one modern scholar of Talmud has written, "it was the authentic and, in a figurative sense, the foreordained interpretation of a divine text."[1]

In the insistence that Moses was familiar with the rabbinic tradition before it developed, we may hear an echo of the apocalyptic practice of attributing visions and viewpoints of the late and post-biblical period to seers of the ancient past. "Hence the famous adage, that everything which any student will teach at any future time was already communicated to Moses on Mount Sinai"[2] (Sifre, 79b). And again, "Even that which a distinguished disciple was destined to teach in the presence of his master was already said to Moses on Sinai" (Peah 17 a). "You shall not say that another Moses will arise and bring us another Torah from heaven; I have already made it known to you that 'it is not in heaven' (Deut. 30:12) i.e., there is nothing left of it in heaven" (Deut. R. 8:6). Thus, while the Talmud provides the progressive aspect of revelation in Judaism, that this was so was consistently denied by the rabbis themselves. In true mythic fashion they viewed time and change as unreal in the presence of what they took to be the eternal, unchanging Torah as charter of the Kingdom present.

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[1] Adler, p. 52.

[2] Schecter, p. 134.

The emphasis on the presence of the Kingdom runs through Talmudic literature but is never expressed more precisely than in the passage in which Israel is called to task for its use of the future rather than the present tense in the song sung at the Red Sea. The people were wrong, said the tradition, to have declared that "the Lord will reign for ever and ever" (Ex. 15:18), when having just witnessed the power of God present in the world, they should have said "The Lord does reign" [i.e., here and now]. The Kingdom is established in the present and should not be put off to an uncertain future (Mech., 44 a).

Since Sinai Israel has possessed the "desirable instrument" by means of which the Kingdom can be made real in every moment of life.

> Beloved are Israel, seeing that the Holy One, blessed be He, has surrounded them with precepts. They have phylacteries on their heads and on their arms, a fringe on their garments and the Mezuzah on their doors; and concerning these, said David, "Seven times a day do I praise Thee because of Thy righteous precepts.'"
> (Ps. 69:164) (Men., 43b)

All these mnemonic devices and the vast additional array mandated in the Talmud are given "that ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto the Lord your God."[1] As might be expected of a religion dominated by teachers and scholars, there are passages in the Talmud which place study above all worldly activity. Mishnah Peah ch. 1 lists nine fundamental acts of righteousness commanded by the tradition and then concludes, "but the study of Torah is equal to them all." The rabbinic insistence on perpetual Torah study was not always without humor. To one rabbi presumptuous enough to ask, "Since I have learned the whole of the Torah, may I study Greek philosophy?" The answer was given based upon a Biblical verse, "This book of Torah shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it" (Josh. 1:8), therefore, "Go and search at which hour it is neither day nor night and devote it to the study of Greek philosophy" (Men. 99b).

Although the rabbis of the Talmudic age did speak of the eventual restoration of the Temple in the Kingdom to come,[2] they held that in the Kingdom present, it had been superceded by Torah. "Greater is study of Torah than the rebuilding of the Temple" (Meg., 16b). The ancient institutions of priest and king are dismissed in the rabbinic saying that "the Torah is greater than the priesthood and than royalty . . ." (Avot, 6:6); and again, God Himself affirms, "Better to Me is one day spent in occupation with the Torah, than a thousand burnt offerings. . ." (Shab., 30 a). In these verses, we hear echoes of the prophets' ancient stress on the Kingdom of God as other than the formal institutions of men.[1]

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[1] S. Singer, The Standard Daily Prayer Book (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1960), p. 50.

[2] They make frequent reference to various aspects of the future Kingdom. Messianism was a basic tenet of their faith. However, it was to the delineation of the present Kingdom of Torah that they devoted their primary attention.

The rabbis, in fact, considered themselves to be in the line of the prophets whom they viewed as the original commentators on the Torah.[2] And together with their stress on study, the rabbis perpetuated the prophetic emphasis on righteousness and purity of motivation. "More beloved by Me are the justice and righteousness which you perform than sacrifices" (Ber., 4b). But the performance must be accompanied by pure and holy motivation. "when thou risest to pray, let thy heart rejoice within thee, since thou servest a God, the like unto whom there is none" (Ber., 31 a). This joy in prayer which stems from total devotion to God, the only motivation for any action acceptable to the rabbis, is to be carried over into every aspect of life. For, ultimately prayer is life properly lived. And here we come to the sum and substance of all Talmudic legislation. The purpose throughout was to make of life an unending hymn of praise to God.

> Man should praise the Holy One, blessed be He, with every limb in his body, even as David did who praised Him with his head, with his eyes, with his mouth, with his ears, with his throat, with his tongue, with his lips, with his heart, with his reins, with his hands, with his feet, it is said "All my bones shall say, Lord who is like unto thee?" (Ps. 35:10); nay, with his soul and his breath.
>
> (Taan., 2 a)

In this total devotion to God and His commandments Israel as a people created and maintained by its Divine King is coextensive with His Kingdom on earth.

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[1] As it had been crucial for the prophets to separate the Kingdom from the earthly Temple and monarchy so as to preserve the faith of Israel after the destruction of these institutions, so now it was the essential task of the rabbis to demonstrate that Judaism could exist and flourish following the second destruction of the Temple and the Holy City.

[2] Schecter, p. 119.

> "If my people," God says to the angels, "decline to proclaim me as King upon earth, my Kingdom ceases also in heaven." Hence Israel says unto God, "Though Thou wast from eternity the same ere the world has been created, yet Thy throne was not established and Thou wast not known; but in the hour when we stood by the Red Sea, and recited a song before Thee, Thy Kingdom became firmly established and Thy throne was firmly set."
>
> (Exod. R., 23:1)

In Talmud, Torah was firmly established as the spiritual landscape of God's Kingdom present on earth. Israel was that Kingdom and every Jew, in acknowledging the authority of the King's Law, became a subject of a mythic realm which had an absolute claim on his life negating those of history. In Torah the Jew also found an echo of the Kingdom to come in which all men would submit themselves to the rule of God. The Jew's task was to keep the Torah to the best of his ability, praying always that God might endow him with the purity of motivation necessary to the perfect observance of the commandments. He prayed also for the coming of that great day when God would be acknowledged as King over all the earth, hoping that by his prayers and devotion to Torah he might bring that day a moment or two closer to realization. But that realization was ultimately in God's hands. Historic progress toward the Kingdom to come was a concept essentially foreign to Talmudic thought which had been influenced by the apocalyptic view that the "world to come" would break into and end this world in God's own good time.

And so the Jew lived, suspended between two myths of the Kingdom--one a static present, the other a distant future. This double mythic existence in a realm removed from the temporality that controls history characterized Jewish life for nearly two millennia, endowing it with a timeless quality that defied intrusions by the external world.[1] From the point of view of history, Judaism had entered upon a mythic sleep of indifference to the great ages and ideas of the surrounding civilization; but from the mythic standpoint Judaism had discovered the secret of life itself in all its richness, fullness, and depth. Well could the Jew proclaim in his daily prayers:

> Happy are they that dwell in thy house:
> they will be ever praising thee.
> Happy is the people, that is in such a case:
> happy is the people, whose God is the Lord.[2]

B. History Co-opts Myth

1. Enlightenment and Emancipation

Myth Becomes Mythology

For fifteen centuries, while Europe endured Roman rule,[3] fell into post-Roman barbarism, emerged into baptized paganism,[4] threw itself into the religious frenzy and renewed barbarism of the Crusades, developed the rich but circumscribed civilization of medieval Christendom, blossomed in the Renaissance, was convulsed by the Reformation, and struggled toward the enlightenment--Jewry remained suspended in time, absorbed in its profound mythic concentration on the Kingdom present and to come. Whether this timeless concentration on Torah and Messiah was a barren mythic sleep or a rich mythic life depends, of course, on the pre-suppositions of one's evaluation--whether one is judging from a mythic or an historical perspective. But, however one evaluates this long period of Jewish existence, one ought not to be drawn into romanticized oversimplifications which deny the variousness and complexity of the daily experience of the Jew.[1] Like the Christians among whom he lived--and who also defined themselves within a mythic framework--the Jew was faced with the necessity of earning a living, raising a family and generally pursuing the ordinary activities of daily life. He was no phantom, but a flesh and blood human being. But the fact remains that in all those centuries not a single historic act was initiated by the Jews as a body.

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[1] Representative selections from the vast post-Talmudic rabbinic literature which continues into the modern period can be found in Solomon B. Freehof, ed., A Treasury of Responsa (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963).

[2] Singer, p. 34.

[3] The story of Jewry in the middle years of Roman domination is admirably told in S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., The Jewish People in the First Century (Assen: Van Gorcum and Co., 1974). For detailed information on the war of the Jewish zealots against Roman rule, see George C. Brauer, Jr., Judaea Weeping (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1970) and Moshe Pearlman, The Zealots of Masada (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967).

[4] Jewry in the first five centuries of Christianity is dealt with in Salo Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962).

Long before, in a process begun by the fall of the Davidic kingdom, Jewry had become increasingly estranged from history. While scribe and priest had imbued this people's consciousness with a mythic conception of the present, prophet and apocalyptist had intoxicated its soul with a mythic view of the future. Resting in this double myth of a present and future shorn of temporal quality, Jewry itself fell out of the flow of time and entered a static realm in which the present became an ongoing cycle of feasts and fasts, prayer and study[1]--and waiting for that great day when God would call his children into a new age, a future of Eden-like peace as unchanging and timeless as the already timeless present. Despite his daily tasks and worldly concerns--despite the buffeting of history in the form of the surrounding peoples who often violently disrupted the round of his existence -- it was within this mythic context that the Jew's self-understanding developed.

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[1] Nowhere is this life described with more animation than in Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, Life Is with People (New York: Schocken Books, 1974). An informative treatment of a little understood aspect of medieval Jewish existence can be found in Nachum Gross, ed., Economic History of the Jews (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), pp. 19-54.

Had not the Talmud itself commanded work as essential to the pious life? "Excellent is the study of the Torah combined with some worldly endeavor, for the labor involved in the pursuit of both makes one oblivious of sin" (Avot 2:2). And, as to the hostility of the nations, that too was part of the Divine plan, the mythic whole to be accepted with both resignation and love, as a haunting passage reveals: "Though God," says Israel, "brings me into distress and embitters me, he shall lie betwixt my breasts" (Shab. 88b). The grinding poverty to which Jews were subjected due to restrictive legislation and the scorn of their neighbors was likewise seen as fulfillment of a command of the mythic King.

> This is the path of the Torah: A morsel of bread with salt shall you eat, and water by measure shall you drink, and upon the ground shall you sleep, and a life of trouble shall you live, and in the Torah shall you toil. If you do this, "Happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee"; happy shall you be in this world, and it shall be well with you in the world to come.
>
> (Avot 6:4)

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[1] A more than adequate idea of the all-encompassing nature of the religious round of Jewish existence during this extended period can be gained from a perusal of a nineteenth century abridgement of the classic sixteenth century code of religious conduct and regulation compiled by Joseph Caro. See Hyman E. Goldin. Code of Jewish Law [trans. of Solomon Ganzfried, Kitzur Shulham Aruh, 1870] (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1961), 4 vols.

The patience and devotion, the faith and love and--yes--the happiness in God's service expressed in these verses can seduce even the modern reader whose wider, if less profound, sympathies would make their enactment impossible in today's drastically altered world. What the Talmudic Jew had--a unitary world-view, a sure and unchanging sense of who and what he was, an intimate feeling of belonging in an all-embracing, life-sustaining community, and a knowledge of exactly what he was to do and for Whom he was to do it--must seem incredible treasures to fragmented, drifting modern man. And so they seemed to the Jew who century after century repeated, "Happy are they who dwell in Thy house."

But there came a time when the happiness seemed to fade, or at least was no longer universally felt. The myth of the Kingdom present came under attack by a series of related movements, all apparently united by hostility to the intellectualism of the Talmud and the restraints of the Torah, in combination with an exclusive preoccupation with the Kingdom to come, issuing in frenzied messianisms of the most irresponsible sort. The antinomian emotionalism of sixteenth century Lurian Kabbalism[1] provided an ongoing focus for the most outrageous excesses. The intense messianic expectations of this movement gave rise to the pseudo-messiahs Sabbatai Zevi[2] in the seventeenth century and Jacob Frank[3] nearly a hundred years later. These developments threw major sections of Jewry into chaos and revealed continuing dissatisfaction with rabbinic controls. Whether the cause of the disturbances lay in a growing desperation over the wretched material conditions under which Jews were forced to live, the continued persecution to which they were subjected, or the ossification of rabbinic thought itself which had long since passed its period of creative expression--it would be difficult, if not impossible to say. However, we can detect in the promises of the anti-Talmudic movements of an immediate and tangible fulfillment of messianic hopes, a confused yet unmistakable yearning to break out of Judaism's static situation into the realm of historic action.[1] The promises made were so fully couched in mythic terminology as to be historically unrealizable, but the desire for some kind of change, having once been expressed, remained despite the disappointments attending the failure of each messianic project in turn.

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[1] An introduction to this movement is available to the English reader in Gershom Scholem's works, Zohar: The Book of Splendor (New York: Schocken Books, 1963); On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism (New York: Schocken Books, 1970) and Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).

[2] See the masterful study by Gershom Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

[3] Graetz, 5:232-90.

With the collapse of each movement the people seemed to return to the age-old mythic conceptions, but something had changed. For reasons, as we have stated, either of external pressure or inner decay, the myth was becoming inadequate to express the state of consciousness of many of those for whom it had long offered self-definition. In their eyes it had ceased to be a living mythic reality and had become mere mythology. Now the distinction between myth and mythology as we are using the terms lies solely in the experience people have of themselves. Myth becomes mythology when its former adherents come to regard it as outdated, fossilized and no longer capable of defining contemporary reality. As a museum piece, mythology may fascinate but it can no longer tell us who we are. In this sense, mythology is myth viewed from the outside--a relic of a time or place which we no longer inhabit or wish that we did not.

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[1] One Zionist author quite correctly sees the messianism of the eighteenth century Italian Moshe Chaim Luzatto as a forerunner of the reborn Jewish nationalism of the next century. The same could be said of all the pseudo-messianic movements. See Shalom Spiegel, Hebrew Reborn (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 36-37.

Judging from what was about to occur in the mid-eighteenth century to considerable numbers of European Jews, it cannot be doubted that for some time before that period, many Jews felt the loss of power of the mythic Kingdom although they did not at first know where or in which direction to turn for release. The bogus messianisms--pitiful, tragic though they appear--represented a first, halting attempt of these Jews to free themselves from what they had come to regard as the fetters of a dead past. And if that past continued to live on into the present it was only as a living corpse which had lost the powers of movement and speech. But, as Jewry was about to discover, this particular corpse retained one power--that of resurrection.

Moses Mendelssohn: Into Universal History

The call to new life came in the year 1750. In the city of Berlin there appeared a new Jewish publication, written not in the Yiddish of the ghetto, but in the clear, precise, ringing tones of the ancient Hebrew tongue, dead for two millennia. To those elements of Jewry whose minds had been honed to a fine intellectual edge by the logical exercises of the Talmud, but who yearned for a wider world in which to apply their talents than that of the confined ghetto Kingdom, the appearance of this little journal provided a first opening into the history and civilization of eighteenth century Europe. Thus began the great historic movement of the emancipation of European Jewry.[1]

The enlightenment which had for a century been transforming European consciousness had passed the Jews by. Spinoza had had little or no effect on the thinking of his own people for whom the great new world of thought outside the ghetto remained alien territory. But by 1750 the time had come for that world and the Jew to be introduced. The Berlin journal was the work of a man admirably suited to perform the introduction, Moses Mendelssohn. It would be difficult to overemphasize the singular importance of the role played by this one ghetto born, self-educated, enlightened and cultured Jew in the emancipation of his co-religionists; however, we ought not to forget that the time had not, until the mid-eighteenth century, been opportune for an escape from the all-embracing myth of Jewish civilization. Spinoza, we must recall, had been denounced quite as vigorously by Christians as by Jews. Even in his time, a century earlier than Mendelssohn's, the hold of myth over Christian Europe had not been broken. For most Jews seeking egress from their native mythic environment, the only escape was into an alternative myth, equally as restrictive and lacking even the comforts of familiarity. And even if another possibility had been available to those with less courage and originality than Spinoza (a category which covers at least ninety-nine percent of humanity, Jewish and non-Jewish), it is doubtful that the desire of some Jews to move into history was at that time sufficiently developed and defined in their own minds for them to have taken advantage of it. In Mendelssohn, as was to be said about another, "The man and the hour had met."

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[1] The story of this movement is skillfully related in Graetz, 5:291-373. This author's favorable views are balanced by the hostile treatments of Spiegel, pp. 47-72, and Arthur A. Cohen, The Natural and Supernatural Jew (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), pp. 19-28.

This remarkable man had begun his studies with the Talmudic texts which were the ubiquitous companions of every Jewish male child of his period, especially one who, like Mendelssohn, was the son of a scribe of the Law. But this young man went on. He studied Maimonides, mathematics, and logic and began to delve into the mysterious world of European letters, in the process familiarizing himself with languages hitherto unknown to him. His finely drawn Hebrew prose knew no restriction of subject matter, expressing its author's feelings for nature as well as for nature's God. From his earliest literary beginnings, he sought to awaken in his fellow Jews interest in the subjects which were at that time exciting the great world of German and French culture. His tool was a rejuvenated Hebrew--a language of which most Jews had some knowledge of a more or less precise nature--to bridge the gap between the Yiddish of the ghetto (written in Hebrew characters) and the high German as yet unfamiliar to his co-religionists.

Mendelssohn was thrust into prominence when he became the most promising protege of the great German _belle lettrist_ Gotthold Lessing, already a noted liberal (in the best enlightenment sense of the term) and admirer of the Jews. Under Lessing's influence, Mendelssohn perfected his German writing style and began to compose notable philosophical essays. In one of his works (_Philosophical Conversations_, 1755) he included a ringing defense of the German intellectual genius. Here we have in these early sentiments of the liberated Jew, the expression of a patriotism of the highest type (extolling the powers of the mind and soul, rather than of the sword) for a country which had yet to grant anything approaching full citizenship to its Jewish residents.

Mendelssohn's faith in the flowering of the ideals of German culture--a flowering which would perforce include the Jews--was to become a hallmark of the emancipation of Jewry throughout Europe. It has become a commonplace to observe that Mendelssohn inhabited two worlds; but such is certainly the case. Publicly he was a leader of general German culture; privately he was an observant Jew faithful to the Torah entrusted to him by God and countless pious generations. Through his influence great numbers of bright young Jews emerged from the ghetto and breathed the bracing air of German and European civilization. He prepared them to embrace German citizenship when it was finally offered, to adopt German culture and language and to view the German soil, rather than some messianic never-never land as their home.

At the same time, Mendelssohn became, albeit reluctantly, the major apologist for Judaism before the Gentile world. He was finally drawn into religious debate by a proselytizing Christian friend who, like all such, wished to love the Jews--to death. The philosopher's hesitation to speak out in defence of Judaism as opposed to Christianity reveals much about the shockingly oppressive conditions of the mass of his people at the time. Expressing his reluctance, Mendelssohn wrote,

> I am a member of an oppressed people which must appeal to the benevolence of the government for protection and shelter--which are not always granted, and never without limitations. Content to be tolerated and protected, my fellow Jews willingly forgo liberties granted to every other human being. Barred even from temporary residence in many countries, they consider it no small favor when a nation admits them under tolerable conditions. As you know, your circumcised friend may not even visit you in Zurich, because of the laws of your own home town. Thus, my co-religionists owe much grateful appreciation to any government that shows them humanitarian consideration and permits them, without interference, to worship the Almighty in the ways of their fathers. They enjoy a fair amount of freedom in the country in which I live. Should they therefore attack their protectors on an issue to which men

> of virtue are particularly sensitive? Or would it not be more fitting if they abstained from religious pursuits with the dominant creed?[1]

These sentiments which later Jewish nationalists would view with scorn express the twin German Jewish attitudes of the period immediately before their political emancipation: genuine fear of the controlling powers of Church and State together with a readiness to accept with gratitude whatever freedoms were offered them, always hopeful of more enlightened days to come. This hope--this faith in the ultimate enlightenment of Germany and indeed of all humanity--even as regards Jews--was expressive of the historical progressivism of Mendelssohn and his circle. Such was the universal messianism of the Jewish enlightenment and emancipation.

But despite his protests, Mendelssohn was to deliver a spirited and original defense of Judaism in a number of works, most notably his Jerusalem (1783).[2] His view was that Judaism as a religion is perfectly in accord with reason in all of its affirmations (the existence and unity of God; the requirement that men conduct themselves according to rules of righteousness and love; the immortality of the soul; etc.) and was therefore not revealed but natural to humanity, its principles being agreed to by all civilized men. But as Law, Judaism is a revealed code, literally and historically bestowed upon Israel at Sinai. Thus, while religiously the Jew was one with universal humanity, as regards his Divine commission to keep the whole Torah in all its details, he must remain distinct. The motto later used to describe Mendelssohn's thinking, "Be a Jew in your tent and a man abroad," might sum up his civilizational and religious views.[1]

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[1] Moses Mendelssohn, "Jerusalem" and Other Jewish Writings, ed. Alfred Jospe (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 120.

[2] Mendelssohn, pp. 11-110.

Unquestionably more influential than the rather strained religious philosophy touched on above--at least, more influential on his fellow Jews--was Mendelssohn's German translation of the Torah. His reasons for preparing the translation were clear enough.

> According to the initial plan for my future, as I had outlined it during my better years, I certainly never intended to become a publisher or translator of the Bible. . . . After some deliberation, I found that the remainder of my energy would still suffice to render a service to my children and perhaps even to a considerable number of my people, if I provided them with a better translation and explanation of the Holy Scriptures than those available until now. This is the first step to culture from which, alas, my nation has held itself so aloof that one might almost despair of any possibility of improvement.[2]

Here we have the key to the mentality of the Jewish enlightenment. In this movement, Jews were for the first time viewing the Judaism of the Talmudic-Ghetto tradition from the outside looking in.[3] They had adopted the attitudes toward "culture" of the general European civilization of which they had become a part. Through study of his German Bible, Mendelssohn hoped to integrate the Jews into that country's culture via the crucial medium of language (That the copies of this work destined for the masses of Jewry were written in Hebrew characters[4] testifies to the prevailing state of German literacy among a people that had lived in the country for five centuries.) His hope was realized more rapidly than he could have foreseen.

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[1] Spiegel, quoting J. L. Gordon, p. 63.

[2] Mendelssohn, p. 152.

[3] Spiegel (who naturally disapproves), p. 62.

[4] Graetz, 5:329.

In the years following Mendelssohn, Western Jews entered the mainstreams of their native lands. First culturally, then politically they became Frenchmen, Germans, Dutchmen--and of course Englishmen and Americans--"of the Mosaic persuasion," as they put it. Culturally, linguistically, nationally they were Europeanized. Nation after nation granted civil rights to Jews--at different times and to varying degrees, but all pointing in the same direction of full emancipation and equality. The French Revolution speeded the process immeasurably, bringing political equality to French Jews in 1790-91. Napolean's conquests brought emancipation to ghetto Jews across Europe inviting them to partake of the riches of citizenship and civilization. The restoration of the old regimes following Napoleon's defeat caused considerable reaction, but the trend could not long be resisted. However, political equality did not necessarily bring with it social acceptance and religious tolerance on the part of the dominant "Christian" population. Resistance and reaction leading to the growth of a new variety of Judeophobia called "anti-Semitism" took hold a century after Mendelssohn's death. But more of that in the next section.[1]

World History and Human Identity

Mendelssohn sought to preserve the mythic Kingdom present (Torah) while historicizing and universalizing the kingdom future. For him the kingdom was not only to come; it was coming in the moral and spiritual self-perfecting of man; it was to come in the certain completion of that process. Although, from the standpoint of the late twentieth century we might find something mythical in such a progressivist faith, for Mendelssohn the essence of his conviction was historical. His messiah was a rational, morally and spiritually sensitive humanity in process of coming to birth. He had abandoned the far off myth of Jewish messianism for what seemed to him to be an historic possibility more likely of realization, just as he had left the stagnant ghetto of his youth for the throbbing dynamic cultural life of Berlin's schools and salons. And if, tragically, universal good will was to prove as illusive as the promised son of David, and Berlin was to plunge Europe into a new and barbaric dark age, becoming the ghastly betrayer of the Jews who had placed in her their love and trust--mercifully he was not there to see.

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[1] An informative overview of this period is available in Schwartz, pp. 315-37.

And if Mendelssohn's secular messianism of universal humanity proved chimerical, so did his attempt to preserve the mythic Kingdom present. The Judaism we were left with once the ghettos of Western Europe were all but eliminated was not--could not be--the Kingdom we had known. That all-embracing, all-defining world had been a total religious civilization--strict in its demands yet generous in its support. The Medieval Jew had been part of a corporate system in which Jewish communities had a despised but recognized part to play. And as long as his dominant myth remained strong, his despisers could not touch the Jew's heart in which he knew that he was beloved and elected by God.

With the collapse of that ghetto world, Jewry was broken in a new and threatening way. The enlightenment viewed all men as individuals to be accorded equal rights as citizens. There was little place for corporate bodies such as Jewry had always been. The Jew now stood on his own, free to choose to affiliate with the synagogue of his choice (what nonsense such terminology would have been two and a half centuries ago!) or to be a free agent. The fact that some chose to abandon Judaism altogether--to accept baptism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; to drift off into secularism in the twentieth need not detain us here; the price for the rigors of freedom is the winnowing out of the weak, the thoughtless, the confused.

A more disturbing problem was--and is--that for those who elected to remain faithful to Torah in whatever degree, Mendelssohn's program and the acculturation of the Jews reduced Judaism from religious civilization to religious confession. Regardless of how fervently he might believe in the God and mission of Israel, for a Jew to say that he was a Jew could no longer serve as an exhaustive self-definition; he was also a Frenchman, an Englishman, an American, sharing in the ethos of his nation in which Jewish and Christian cultures were at last equal--in their total absence. Is this, to put it bluntly, bad? No--not from the historic perspective which the Jewish Frenchman, Englishman, or American shares with his compatriots of other faiths. But from the mythic perspective, such a fragmentation of self is profoundly debilitating. How can God be King over one's life if one's various identities divide that life into several fragments, none of them whole?

It must be apparent by now that the dilemma of the post-enlightenment Western Jew is precisely the dilemma of his Christian counterpart. It is no good to say that Christianity was always a religion while Judaism was a civilization, Christendom as an all-embracing structure of definition had been as real (if marginally less intense because more diffuse) as Talmudic Judaism. Both have passed and with them the integrated, unified human personality in harmony with its environment. We are so much the children of the enlightenment (we cherish its legacy of individual liberty even if we reject its fantasies of inexorable human progress) that none of us--I think, really, not one--would return to the medieval ghetto, whether the microghetto of Jewry or the macroghetto of Christendom. (Those who wish to remain there have never left; they keep their myths alive whether in the urban ghettos of Hasidic Judaism or the rural ghettos of Amish Christianity.) But what of us who have substituted multiple identities for the single one that sustained our fathers? Perhaps our discomfiture is a necessary function of maturity whether as individuals or as a civilization. Or perhaps both individual identity and civilizational cohesiveness have both entered the stage of terminal disintegration. Either way, if Scripture is correct in its affirmation that, "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit," then we--all of us--of the modern world should certainly qualify for Divine acceptance. In that hope, we will pursue these issues in our final chapter.

> a broken and contrite heart, O God,
> thou wilt not despise.
> (Ps. 51:17)

2. Zionism

The Post Emancipation Dilemma

The enlightenment and emancipation were movements aimed at "normalization" of the Jewish condition in which Jews were to become not only "like the nations," they were to become the nations. Nationally, culturally, linguistically Jews were to enter the mainstream of Western civilization, retaining only their religious distinctiveness, now shorn of explicit culturual expressions, as the mark of their Jewishness. At this writing, the process inaugurated by Mendelssohn has been so successful that it is difficult for the contemporary Jewish American or Jewish Frenchman to appreciate the enormity of the barriers to acculturation faced by the early reformers. In our age of active Jewish participation in virtually every aspect of Western life, notably the leadership roles of Jews in the professions and in the intellectual fields of endeavor,[1] one cannot easily project one's imagination back to a time when the great mass of Jews were unable to read or write the langauges of the lands in which they had resided as perennial strangers for centuries. Today the image of the wandering, stateless, homeless Jew is without meaning to moderns who comfortably declare themselves to be American citizens of the Jewish faith. And, although the non-religious among them may inaccurately refer to their Jewish identity as cultural or ethnic rather than religious, there is today simply no such thing as Jewish culture in the Western world anymore than there is Christian culture. As for ethnicity, what there was of it died out in the second generation in which the children of the immigrants threw off the habits of the Eastern European ghettos from which their parents had come.

There is today a Jewish community--cohesive, active, and of considerable strength--in America and the other major Western nations, but is is organized along religious and philanthropic lines with few if any Jewish cultural aspects. As we have said, Jewish culture has ceased to exist except perhaps in the Hasidic pockets of ghetto life which still remain as rich but anachronistic survivors from the Middle Ages. Western Jewish communities can boast members who are among the very shapers of contemporary culture; but the culture they shape is Western, not

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[1] See Louis Finkelstein, ed., The Jews: Their Role in Civilization (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), passim.

Jewish. Now, as we have stated, if the Jewish American is as American in his cultural life as he is Jewish in his religious life--and he is--then there is no reason to bemoan the passage of a distinctively Jewish culture. Much was lost with the passage of the ghetto culture, but much was gained by participation in a civilization more appropriate to the present age.

The more serious problem, as we have stated, was the loss of the sense of the Divine Presence in the corporate and individual life of Jewry. The Jewish American is not culturally divided--he is part of the American culture; nor, despite the slanders of anti-Semites and the blandishments of Zionists (two groups which agree on more points than one might suspect[1]), is the Jewish American nationally divided--he is part of the American nation, a firm identity which is in no way lessened by his natural and proper sympathy and support for his beleagured co-religionists in Israel or the Soviet Union.

But the Jewish American, together with his Christian neighbor is spiritually diminished. The secularist culture of which he is an integral part has relegated religion to one corner of the individual's life--privatized, isolated, shorn of its ancient powers of expression. In vain do the synagogues, faithful though they be to the essentially religious nature of Jewish tradition, call for total commitment. Of course, the modern Jew is committed to Judaism; but he is also committed to so many other things, so many aspects of his multiple identities. In such circumstances, the very word, "commitment" takes on a new meaning in which the adjective "partial" is understood to be invisibly attached to it. It was against such fragmentation and diffusion of identities and commitments that the second great movement for Jewish historical awakening took its stand.

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[1] Both groups view the Jews as a foreign presence in the lands of their birth and desire them to quit these countries. Their reasons are, of course, quite different. Zionists want the Jews to go to Israel; anti-Semites do not care where they go, as long as they go away.

Hess, Pinkser, and Herzl: Into National History

The birth cry of the Zionist movement was sounded in 1862 in Paris by Moses Hess, one of the German Jewish literati of the first post enlightenment generation. He wrote:

> In Germany, the Jews have striven, since Mendelssohn for political and social equality with their German brothers. But despite their participation in German cultural life, despite the denial of their national culture, despite all efforts to become Germanized, it has all been in vain! [But] That which the Jews were not able to obtain as individuals the people can secure as a nation.[1]

In his compelling work, Rome and Jerusalem, Hess spelled out his belief that "Judaism is, above all, a nationality"[2] and that "Should it prove true that the emancipation of the Jews is incompatible with Jewish nationalism, then the Jew must sacrifice emancipation."[3] His principal arguments were presented from within the Jewish spirit itself which, as he recognized, had always been communal. But for him communality and nationalism were one, and, while he did not deny the religious expression which had been normative for the community, he quoted Graetz to the effect that religion was only an incidental phase in the course of the nation's history.[4] Here was a clear statement of Jewish nationalism; that this nationalism was primarily political, Hess made plain in his general proposal for action:

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[1] Moses Hess, Rome and Jerusalem (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1958), p. 8.

[2] Hess, p. 19.

[3] Hess, p. 27.

[4] Hess, p. 9.

> Rome wasn't built in one day; also the new Jerusalem requires time for its gigantic rebuilding. What we need to do today for the reestablishment of the Jewish nationality consists, first of all, of this: to keep alive the hope for our political rebirth. Then when world events . . . will permit a practical beginning for the reestablishment of the Jewish state, this beginning may first of all consist in the founding of Jewish colonies in the Land of the Fathers. . . . [Then] when the spirit of historic nations shall achieve maturity, our people too, together with other historic nations, will simultaneously assume its place in world history.[1]

And so once again, the call was sounded for Jewish entrance into history. Hess had as little use for the mythic Kingdom of Talmudic Judaism as had Mendelssohn before him, but his remedy differed radically from the acculturation of the earlier enlightenment. It was not as citizens of the nations that Jews were to enter world history but as citizens of their own nation reborn politically on its ancient soil. It was not the individual Jew that had to be "normalized" into a German or Frenchman of the Jewish persuasion comparable to his fellow citizens of the Protestant or Catholic persuasions; it was the people as a unit which needed normalization so as to become the political nation of Israel comparable to its fellow nations such as Germany or France. As in the enlightenment the individual had been the ultimate unit of meaning, so now in the age of reborn nationalisms sweeping across Europe, the nation as collective individual was seen as supreme. Hess had perceived the collective nature of Jewry more clearly than had Mendelssohn, but had diminished it once again by rendering secondary, as Mendelssohn had not, its religious essence.

Hess was moved primarily, or so he thought, by what he took to be the inner essence of Judaism. But the external conditions in which he wrote must not be overlooked if we are to understand the growth of the idea of which he was the first major exponent. Zionism was one of the great national movements of the nineteenth century seeking in the political upbuilding of the sovereign state the solution to all the problems--cultural, psychological, etc.--of fragmented, dislocated modern man. The cult of the national family and the mystique of the native soil were in the air, nowhere so powerfully as in Germany. And nowhere more powerfully than in Germany were the signs beginning to appear that in the new nation-states founded on blood and soil, the Jew, as a "cosmopolitan influence" was not wanted.

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[1] Hess, pp. 25, 89.

Analysis of nineteenth century Judeophobia is a complex business. Its history has been written and there is no need to trace here the sordid development of this misbegotten growth.[1] We need only state that from 1819 onward Germanic reaction to the influx of Jews into the national life took hold and produced an incredible flow of anti-semitic "literature" attacking the Jews not as a religious group, but (in good nationalist fashion) a foreign nation, an alien "race" parasitically present within the German body social. Jews, still wedded to the now beleaguered spirit of the enlightenment fought back. But following the collapse of the revolutions of 1848, reaction set in generally across Europe, forcing the Jews into the liberal and leftist movements for reform. The last third of the nineteenth century witnessed the steady growth of two opposed trends: increased Jewish participation in the life of Western

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[1] So much has been written on this subject, it would be difficult to recommend a single book; but the discussion of European Jewry's position in nineteenth century Europe with special focus on Vienna as microcosm of the continent, in one particular volume is so well done that we will take a chance. See Amos Elon, Herzl (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), pp. 1-132.

Europe and intensified anti-Semitic reaction, always virulent and at times violent.[1]

Hess was among the first to react by adopting and Judaizing the dominant political and racial nationalism. As Mendelssohn had sought to introduce the Jews into the nations of Europe, Hess sought to introduce the spirit of the nations of Europe into the Jews. He was followed by a series of fin de siècle Jewish nationalists who had found their way to Zionism as much out of reaction to rising anti-Semitism as out of a political understanding of Jewish peoplehood. In 1882, Leo Pinsker, an assimilated Russian Jewish physician, shocked into new avenues of thought by the outbreak of murderous pogroms in Russia in 1881, and anticipating the infamous May Laws of 1883 through which the Tsarist government sought to drive the Jews to death, conversion, or flight,[2] published his Auto-Emancipation.

> The misery caused by the bloody deeds of violence has been followed by a moment of repose. . . . Close your eyes and hide your heads ostrich-fashion as you will; if you do not take advantage of the fleeting moments of repose, and devise remedies more fundamental than those palliatives with which the incompetent have for centuries tried to relieve our unhappy nation, lasting peace is impossible for you. . . . The eternal problem presented by the Jewish question stirs men today as it did ages ago. It remains unsolved. . . . The essence of the problem, as we see it, lies in the fact that, in the midst of the nations among whom the Jews reside, they form a distinctive element which cannot be assimilated, which cannot be readily digested by any nation. Hence the problem is to find means of so adjusting the relations of this exclusive element to the whole body of the nations that there shall never be any further basis for the Jewish question. . . . The Jews are not a nation because they lack a certain distinctive national character, possessed by every other nation, a character which is determined by

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[1] This period is competently surveyed in Max Margolis and Alexander Marx, History of the Jewish People (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1960), pp. 632-47, 651-718.

[2] This was actually the solution to "the Jewish problem" put forward by the infamous Konstantin Pobedonostsev of Russia's Holy Synod. See Elon, p. 130.

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> living together in one country, under one rule. It was clearly impossible for this national character to be developed in the Diaspora. . . [As regards the Gentile world], Judeophobia is a psychic aberration. As a psychic aberration, it is hereditary; as a disease transmitted for two thousand years, it is incurable. . . . We must not admit that we are doomed to play on in the future the hopeless role of the "Wandering Jew." This role is truly hopeless; it is enough to drive one to despair. . . . Consequently it is our bounden duty to devote all our remaining moral force to re-establishing ourselves as a living nation, so that we may finally assume a more fitting and dignified role.[1]

The despair, the agony, out of the depths of which this man had found his way to the Zionist solution cannot but move the contemporary Jewish reader, removed as he may be from the conditions here described. Where Hess had seen Jewry as already a nation merely in need of a homeland on which to flower, Pinsker, the physician, viewed Jewry as a "patient" and "a dead man" who might, on his own soil yet become again the proud nation he had been in the days of David and Solomon. He spoke in terms of disease and cure, going on to offer comprehensive suggestions for the beginnings of the program of national rejuvenation. In the last chapter of his work, he regretted only that "We probably lack a leader of the genius of Moses"[2] who might carry out the work.

That leader was to appear in little more than a decade. Not a Moses perhaps, but surely a Judah Maccabee, "if not to conquer born to save."[3] As Pinsker had been spurred to action by the outrages in primitive Russia, Theodor Herzl was moved to embrace the nationalist cause by an outrage that was to send shock waves throughout Jewry and indeed the entire civilized world. Herzl, a popular Viennese journalist and playwrite--assimilated, non-religious and something of a dandy--was sent to Paris by his editor to cover the public degradation of the fraudulently convicted Jewish Captain Alfred Dreyfus of the French Army's General Staff. What he witnessed while on this assignment was to change his life and the life of his people, making of this fashionable boulevardier one of the great nation-builders of modern times.

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[1] Arthur Hertzberg, ed., The Zionist Idea (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1960), pp. 182, 191.

[2] Hertzberg, p. 195.

[3] From the text of Handel's oratorio, Judas Maccabaeus (recording released by R.C.A. Corp.), p. 8 of booklet accompanying album.

He was shaken to his marrow by the conduct of the spectators at Dreyfus' ceremonial degradation and expulsion from the army. As he stood among the mob of "civilized" citizens of the civilized French capital, listening to their cries, not of "death to the traitor!" (Herzl, together with almost every one else at that point assumed Dreyfus to be guilty of passing military secrets to Germany), but of "death to the Jews!", he was seized with a presentiment of doom for all of European Jewry. If such sentiments could arise in enlightened France after more than a century of Jewish integration into the general culture, then no Jew anywhere was safe. Herzl's reasons for becoming a Zionist were wholly external; he knew little of the faith of his fathers, had no affiliation with synagogue or community, and was culturally European to his bones. He never pretended anything else.

Shortly after his harrowing experience in Paris, he wrote in his diary:

> I have been occupied for some time past with a work which is of immeasurable greatness. I cannot tell today whether I shall bring it to a close. It has the appearance of a gigantic dream. But for days and weeks it has filled me, saturated even my subconsciousness; it accompanies me wherever I go, broods above my ordinary daily converse, looks over my shoulder and at my petty, comical journalistic work, disturbs me, and intoxicates me.
>
> What it will lead to it is impossible to surmise as yet. But my experience tells me that it is something marvelous, even as a dream, and that I should write it down--if not as a memorial for mankind,

> then for my own delight or meditation in later years. And perhaps for something between both these possibilities: for the enrichment of literature. If the romance does not become a fact, at least the fact can become a romance. Title: The Promised Land![1]

Something of the visionary greatness of the man can be seen in these lines. For the nine years of life remaining to him, Herzl devoted all his energies on behalf of the national idea he developed in his 1896 pamphlet, The Jewish State.

> The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is an ancient one: It is the restoration of the Jewish State.
>
> The world resounds with clamor against the Jews, and this has revived the dormant idea. The decisive factor is our propelling force. And what is that force? The plight of the Jews. . . . In our native lands where we have lived for centuries we are still denied as aliens, often by men whose ancestors had not yet come at a time when Jewish sighs had long been heard in the country. The majority decide who the "alien" is. This, and all else in the relations between peoples, is a matter of power. . . . It is without avail, therefore, for us to be loyal patriots, as were the Huguenots, who were forced to emigrate. If we were left in peace . . . But I think we shall not be left in peace.[2]

He went on to outline his detailed plans for the projected state. His last years were spent in constant diplomatic maneuvering with the heads of the great powers. The German Kaiser, the Turkish Sultan, the Pope all received him but promised nothing. Finally, the British government hinted that it would be willing to offer a territory for Jewish settlement in Uganda. Herzl, who saw the movement as political and humanitarian rather than religious--moved by the desperate plight of the persecuted and literally starving Jewish masses of Russia --resolved to accept the offer. The issue split the international Zionist Movement which he had so painstakingly created and nurtured. Referring to the British proposal, he stated with characteristic humanity:

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[1] Hertzberg, p. 204. See also Theodore Herzl Diaries, trans. and ed. Marvin Lowenthal (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1962), p. 3. These fascinating, haunting diaries are indispensible for the student of this period.

[2] Hertzberg, p. 209.

"Here is a piece of bread! I, who perhaps have cake to eat, have no right to reject this piece of bread which is offered to the poor."[1] But the political activist and humanitarian had misread the sentiments of precisely those Jews most in need. They were the pious ghetto Jews of the East, hardly touched by the enlightenment and unemancipated by their despotic governments. They wanted Zion or nothing.

But Herzl, who loved a people, not a land, could not agree. The dispute damaged his already failing health. As he neared the end, suffering deeply from what he took to be the rejection of those he most desired to serve, he wrote with sadness and pride:

> Here in this city of Vienna, I one day tore myself loose from the entire circle of my life, from all my acquaintances and all my friends and, as a lonely man, stood up for what I considered right. I do not feel the need for a majority. I need only to be in harmony with my own conviction. Then I am content, even if no dog accepts a piece of bread from me.[2]

He died near Vienna on July 3, 1904, at the age of forty-four years, having, as he said, poured out his life for his people. His last will expressed his unaltered faith in the ultimate vindication of the cause for which he had given his life:

> I wish a funeral of the poorest class, without eulogies and without flowers. I wish to be buried in a metal cask in a grave next to my father, there to lie until the Jewish people transfer my remains to Palestine.[3]

This last wish was granted on August 16, 1949. His tomb stands on the summit of Mount Herzl overlooking Jerusalem.

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[1] Elon, p. 398.

[2] Elon, p. 398.

[3] Original on display at the Herzl Museum, Jerusalem.

National History and Jewish Identity

The Zionist movement was the modern incarnation of the nationalist spirit that had motivated David and Solomon and the Maccabeans. The State of Israel is properly referred to as the "third Jewish Commonwealth" representing as it does the recrudescence of the forces which shaped the first two mentioned above. In the wake of Naziism's attempted "final solution of the Jewish question," one finds it difficult to criticize a movement which alone anticipated the horrors to come and which, had it achieved earlier success, might have saved millions of innocents from the flames. However, honesty, as well as the special requirements of this study require us to evaluate the philosophy and the results of this great nation-building project.

Today Israel is a nation-state among the other nations of the world--culturally creative, industrially and agriculturally productive, militarily brilliant. It is, however, a state which defines Jewishness in essentially political terms. For it, the kingdom present is the legal and social reality of the nation--the kingdom future, more of the same. Like the realms of David and the Maccabeans before it, it is a world away from the myth which it has thoroughly historicized. It is a splendid, young, vibrant country, but it can in no way be identified with the Kingdom of God. That, like every nation-state it finds itself locked into the historicism of the modern world, is apparent from the daily news headlines. Having demanded not merely a territory for settlement, but a formally constituted and legally recognized state, Zionism now finds itself confronted by Palestinian Arabs demanding precisely the same thing--and on the same territory. Thus do individuals and corporate bodies become entrapped by historical forces which they had sought to manipulate to their own ends. These inevitabilities, and others, will be discussed at length in our final chapter.

What concerns us here is that Zionism has, for the first time, since the Maccabean age, offered Jews a communal self-definition which is entirely non-religious. Mendelssohn had at least attempted to preserve the religious essence of the former myth. Zionism regards that essence as merely "an incidental phase" in the national history, as Hess, quoting Graetz, so chillingly put it. Thus the myth becomes but a passing moment in an historical process, losing completely its iconoclastic function in regard to historical institutions. More than one Jewish American visiting Israel has met native-born youths who affirm that they are Israelis, not Jews--or, even more disturbing, define Jewishness in strictly political terms. The cleavage that is even now developing between Americans and others of the Jewish faith and Israelis of no faith whatever will become more inescapable as the years go by. This is not to say that Israelis are necessarily any less religious than other people. In this too they are merely "normal" as the Zionist always wanted them to be. But should a Jew be that normal?

The problem is that Israeli citizenship is the formal, official seal on the proposition that being Jewish need have nothing whatever to do with God, His Kingdom or His service. The leading rabbis of Europe who refused all association with Hess, Pinsker, and Herzl may have understood only too well what Zionsim could mean for the Jewish faith. The reduction of a great eternal enterprise of the spirit to the petty usages of politics and nationalism represents an impoverishment so great that we are even now just beginning to sense our loss. Better the honest brokenness of the diaspora--a brokenness in which all men share--than a deceptive "wholeness" achieved at the price of tearing the soul from the Jewish body politic.

We cannot claim that this latest escape into earthly-historical self-definition is not authentically Jewish; even a Jew in full flight from his God remains a Jew. And after all, it has happened twice before. It is all part of (dare we say it) our tradition. But, as an expression of only the historical side of the myth/history dialectic which is Jewish experience, Zionism cannot deliver the solution it promises; for in rendering the Jew "normal" as a political man, it may well have violated those unique spiritual norms which had made him a Jew.

Only one of the Zionist theorists had foreseen the situation as it exists today. Ahad Ha-Am[1] opposed Herzl's strictly political program in the name of a higher Zionism of the spirit. He correctly forecast that the restoration of Zion would by no means result in the "ingathering" of all or even most Jews to the restored state. He also recognized that the ultimate value of the national restoration would be as catalyst in the nobler process of spiritual renaissance of Judaism itself. He understood that political Zionism represented an attempt to restore the wholeness of Jewish existence shattered with the dissolution of ghetto life. But the very political nature of Zionism's own self-definition made it incapable of providing an adequate restoration of a spiritual reality. Ahad Ha-Am saw that, following the re-establishment of the state, the problem would remain of enlarging Judaism as a religious confession into Judaism as a religious civilization. Ever the nationalist, he expected that the restored nation would generate possible solutions to this problem. But that nation, mired in historicism and distracted by constant threats to its continued survival, is hardly in a position to confront the problems of the spirit. The Zionist delusion that the political restoration has made Jewish life whole once again makes it doubtful that it will deal with these problems in the near future. It is perforce from the diaspora that solutions must be generated. Wholeness can only be sought by those who have confronted the brokenness of their condition--as Jews, as human beings. In this spirit, our last chapter takes up Ahad Ha-Am's challenge to seek for "a Judaism which shall have . . . its renascence and its free development through the expression of universal human values in terms of its own distinctive spirit."[1, 2]

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[1] Born in the Russian Ukraine on August 18, 1856; died after a lifetime of service to the cause of Jewish national and spiritual renewal, Tel-Aviv, January 2, 1927.

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[1] Hertzberg, p. 255.

[2] The pros and cons of Zionism have been addressed in a number of interesting books, some of which are: Oskar K. Rabinowicz, Arnold Toynbee on Judaism and Zionism (London: W. H. Allen, 1974), in which the author defends Jewish nationalism and crosses swords with many of the major objections to the movement. Anti-Zionist works worth looking at are Elmer Berger, The Jewish Dilemma (New York: The Devin-Adair Co., 1945), a classic statement of American Jewish objection to Jewish Nationalism; Michael Selzer, ed., Zionism Reconsidered: The Rejection of Jewish Normalcy (London: The Macmillan Co., 1970), a remarkable collection of anti-Zionist essays and statements from Orthodox rabbis to liberal academicians; and Arie Bober, ed., The Other Israel (New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1972), a frenetic blend of Communist propaganda and radical claptrap which is of interest only in that it introduces the thoughtful non-Zionist to those waiting on the lunatic left to exploit and distort every expression of dissatisfaction with the State of Israel.

Some unique and compelling expressions of what one might term a Zionism of the spirit are: Martin Buber, On Zion (New York: Schocken Books, 1973); Ludwig Lewisohn, Israel (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925); and Josue Jehouda, The Five States of Jewish Emancipation (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1966). Good general treatments of the movement from two different perspectives are: Ben Halpern, The Idea of the Jewish State (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) and Jay Y. Gonen, A Psychohistory of Zionism (New York: Mason/Charter, 1975).

Part Two

THE KINGDOM TODAY

IV. THE POST-MODERN PERIOD

A. Myth, History and Beyond

Today, as in past ages, to be a Jew is to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God--to live by its laws, to proclaim its promise. The Jew is to the world what the priest is to the congregation.[1] That is to say, the Jew is at once witness for God and to man, and catalyst in the process of human becoming,calling man to live in and toward his own human possibilities. Before defining this task further--for today the Kingdom can only be a task, a calling--we must review the way along which we have come in this study and in more than three thousand years of Jewish experience.

As we have attempted to demonstrate, the Kingdom has always been the central conceptual framework of Jewish theology and existence. Mosaic thought challenged the dominant nature myths whose repetitive patterns concealed an essentially static vision of reality. But it was not history as such that issued the challenge. The historical kingdom of Pharaoh was as much the target of the Mosaic offensive as was the myth. Hebrew thought in its infancy represented something new in its dynamism and creativity. The events at the Red Sea were experienced by the former slaves as a double liberation from and victory over both nature and history which at that moment ceased to exist as independent forces. With the turning back of the sea and the drowning of the Egyptians, both nature and history became dependent elements of the all-embracing Kingdom of God, the Creator and Director of all that is. Needless to say, that which is created is not natural and that which is directed (from outside) is not historical. What happened at the Red Sea was, in a word, redemption. But what is redemption other than new creation? What was revealed at the Red Sea was the power of a new myth unlike any that had been seen before because it comprehended both nature and history in an all-encompassing creative design. Thus, the Kingdom was proclaimed. It now remained to be realized.

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[1] This idea is developed most thoroughly in the writings of Philo of Alexandria who was expanding on the Biblical designation of Israel as "a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6). See Philo, Complete Works (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), passim.

We witnessed its initial mythic realization in the establishment of the Israelite Tribal Confederacy with all its sense of the presence of the Kingdom under the direct rule of the Divine King. What had been lost, however, in this mythic realization was the original creative dynamic of the Mosaic faith which had faded away with the achievement of its goal, the Promised Land. This is not to say that a promise fulfilled loses all power, but rather that in ceasing to be a promise, the particular power of movement necessary to achieve it dissolves into a no less real but very different power of maintenance generated by the new static reality. Such a power, if buttressed by the immediate consciousness of the presence of the Divine King of whose mythic Kingdom one is both subject and dependent, is far from negligible and can maintain the status quo for a considerable length of time, in this case nearly two centuries.

However, the mythic power to sustain an unchanging earthly reality by locating it in the larger context of a Divinely ordered cosmos can continue to function only as long as it can either co-opt or hold at bay the inescapable historical thrust of human existence.

Movement into the new cannot permanently be prevented. As we have seen, the ironic element of the early Israelite story is that in achieving its pre-established goal (the mythic Kingdom of God in the Land of Promise), Israelite theology moved perforce into a condition of stasis which rendered it incapable of fending off powerful historic forces from outside. Mosaic thought had incorporated the dynamism of historical change; Amphictyonic thought had done away with history altogether by declaring the Kingdom to have come. "Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established" (Ex. 15:17). But there can be no sanctuary permanently immune to the dynamic of change. History broke into the mythic reality of the Amphictyonic Kingdom in the form of the Philistine armies, leaving the Israelites no alternative but to release the historical dynamic within themselves which the mythic Kingdom had long suppressed.

The result was the Israelite monarchy, which eventually mustered the strength needed to defeat the enemy but, in so doing, adopted much of the world-historical thought which had long been alien to Israel's self-conception. In an ordinary historical sense, the monarchy flourished, so much so in fact that one must conclude that the benefits it brought to the nation would have proved satisfactory to any other people. But this people was unique in having experienced the direct rule of a Divine Monarch with whom no earthly king could possibly compete. The old mythic order personified in Samuel had resisted historical necessity from the beginning, seeing in the establishment of the human kingdom a usurpation of Divine prerogatives. As history drifted inevitably into historicism and Israelites began to define themselves within the limited and limiting categories of their new politico-historicistic national reality, the power of the myth broke loose in the thunderings of those unique Israelite figures, the prophets.

The prophetic polemic against the earthly-historical kingdom continued for three centuries with the double effect of re-vitalizing the spiritual powers of the nation while afflicting its political institutions with continuous uncertainty and self-doubt. One's final evaluation of the work of the prophets would depend on where one stood in the myth/history dialectic of the Kingdom, but what cannot be denied is that the prophetic protest, arising as it did from within the very depths of the unique Israelite self-conception, demonstrated irresistibly the inadequacy of historical categories to express what Israel was and, we venture to say, what Israel remains even today.

In more ways than one, the prophets prepared the way for the crisis of 586 B.C.E. Some would say that they helped to bring it about by weakening the political fabric of the nation. But what cannot be denied is that they made it possible for the people to survive following the destruction of the national institutions they had so long denounced. In the end, of course, it was the Babylonian military machine that brought the earthly kingdom low, but it was the prophets' mythic interpretation of this event that was adopted by the people--adopted so completely that it was to provide the foundation of a mythic mentality redivivus which was to dominate Israelite thought for two millennia.

In Babylonian exile, Israel rediscovered itself as a religious community "not reckoning itself among the nations" (Num. 23:9), a people unique in its self-understanding as the mythic Kingdom of God. So complete was the reconversion to mythic categories that when, with the Persian conquest of Babylon, the opportunity was offered to return to their earthly homeland, most Israelites declined to go, having concluded that the true Kingdom of God constitutes a mythic reality which history can neither realize nor dispel. And, as we have seen, even those few who did return to the land of Israel remained content to be ruled by purely religious functionaries (priests and later scribes and rabbis) in a land in which the only royal palace was the rebuilt Temple of the Divine Monarch.

The later development of local houses of assembly (synagogues) which eventually replaced the Temple as the central religious institution of Jewry can be seen as a further rejection of earthly monarchic categories and an affirmation of God's universal rule of His people wherever they might be as opposed to the spatial centrality of Jerusalem, the former capital of the historic kingdom. The direct, mythic rule of God over His people was further strengthened by the establishment of the now-completed Torah, brought (significantly) from Babylon by Ezra in 398 B.C.E. as the spiritual rule to be followed by the spiritual people of God. As living Word of God, the Torah was nothing less than the constitution of the mythic Kingdom by which the King held direct sway over his human subjects.

From this point onward, Israel ceased to live in history, properly so-called. Historical action was resorted to only when the mythic Kingdom was directly threatened by external forces as in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, which produced the Maccabean revolution (168 B.C.E.) and the turbulent and unstable monarchy that followed. Undeniably the Maccabean kingdom was a historical phenomenon, but one that was adopted as a last desperate resort in defense of the Torah, not of Israelite political independence. That quasi-independence was established and maintained for a century is less revealing than the facts that the Maccabeans were of the priestly (Levitical) tribe rather than that of Judah (the House of David); that no attempt was made during this period to put a Davidic descendant on the throne; and that as soon as the Maccabee rulers adopted an historicistic self-conception seeing themselves as political figures rather than guardians of the Torah, the people themselves turned on them in an outburst of religious sectarianism (Pharisees, Essenes) which not only led to the fall of the Maccabees but to the permanent eclipse of the credibility and authority of the priesthood among the populous. With the arrival of the Romans in 63 B.C.E. the mythic pattern became more ingrained than ever before. The decay of the Maccabean monarchy had reinforced the anti-historical tendencies dominant since the Exile. Henceforth regardless of which foreign-appointed High Priests and pretender-kings ruled in Jerusalem as Roman puppets, God and God alone ruled in the hearts and daily lives of the people who populated His mythic Kingdom.

The post-exilic period also saw the emergence of the messianic idea as second only to the Torah itself in its power over the people. Despite the views of some that messianism represented the ultimate expression of Israel's so-called "historic faith," the truth is that with rare exception this idea was expressed in heavily mythical terms. Like the faith of Moses and the prophets, the messianic expectation carried with it the hope of an actual, historic overthrow of Israel's foreign oppressors. But as in earlier Israelite thought, this initial dynamic of world-historical action was only a means to a mythical end. As in the earlier visions of Jeremiah (in our view the founder of Jewish messianism), so in the later speculations of Ezekiel, the Isaiah school, and Daniel, the age of the Messiah was imagined as the dawn of the mythic Kingdom of God's rule on earth.

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So perfect, so idealized did this vision become in the late Biblical and Apocryphal-Pseudepigraphical writings that the slide of Jewish thought into fullblown apocalypticism went almost unnoticed. Frustrated and hemmed in by historical forces over which it could exercise no control, emergent Judaism adopted a double vision of reality in which God ruled His people here and now via His Torah and would rule in the future by means of His Messiah. But it must not be supposed that this "double world" theory was grounded in a dialectic of history and myth. For, without doubt, this world (olam hazeh) was every bit as mythical as the world to come (olam habah). God's Kingdom of Torah was no more historic than the messianic age was to be. The latter represented the fulfillment of the former only in that human receptivity would be perfected and all men would come to live consciously in the mythic reality already inhabited by Israel for whom God was All in All.

This vision of Israel as the anticipation of what was eventually to come for all men became fixed in the mythic self-conception of the people and provided the intellectual basis for Rabbinic thought with its double-edged emphasis on the Kingdom present and to come. Within this all-encompassing framework, Rabbinic Judaism developed a totalistic system of thought and action that was to produce perhaps the most thoroughgoing religious civilization ever seen outside monastery walls. Here, too, of course, there were walls: spiritual walls erected from inside by the Rabbinic teachers of the Torah myth and physical walls thrown up by the surrounding forces of Christendom.

It would be a gross overstatement to imply that all Jews lived in ghettos and took no part in the post-Roman civilization of Europe; many played significant roles in the life being lived around them. However, in doing so, they were venturing into foreign territory, a territory outside Israel's Torah myth. The view they had of themselves was, of course, quite different from that in which they were held by the outside world; but in both cases, the view was mythic. The mythic Jewish self-image and the mythic role assigned to Jews by Christendom tended to strengthen each other throughout the medieval period. The effect of Gentile attitudes on Jewish thought was an intensification of the two basic categories of the Rabbinic theology of the Kingdom. The mythic nature of Christian thought during this period caused Israel to cling all the more tenaciously to its Torah myth of the Kingdom present; the anti-Jewish thrust of Christianity's mythic view of Israel expressed itself in persecution of varying intensity and led Jews to yearn the more intensely for the advent of the Messiah myth of the Kingdom to come.

As the Middle Ages gradually faded away and the inexorable process of secularization and demythologization of culture and society progressed, the Jews were at first left behind. Again, individual Jews took part in the new humanist awakening, but not as Jews per se. The dictum of the French Revolution, "To the Jews as human beings--everything; to the Jews as a people--nothing"[1] represented the most liberal thinking of a Christendom emerging into a post-Christian age. One might say that in the process of demythologizing, the Jew as Jew was the last to be demythologized. He could cease to exist as a Jew and thus enter post-mythological European history; or he could remain in the mythic Kingdom of his forefathers. Many chose apostasy and self-historicization, like Heine, viewing baptism as the necessary passport into European civilization. As had been the case millennia earlier at the end of the Israelite tribal confederacy, the static mythic Kingdom proved incapable of dealing with the challenge of dynamic historical forces. As once the armies of Philistia had threatened God's earthly realm with invasion, now the threat came from history's power to lure away the subjects of the mythic Kingdom. Europe beckoned and many Jews responded becoming in the process of assimilation both less and more than Jews.

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[1] This slogan is itself a popular paraphrase of the remarks made during the *Assemblée* debate of December 24, 1789 by Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre who was supporting the right of Jews to be French citizens. Quoted in Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 360.

Although the external situations could hardly have been more dissimilar, the crisis forced upon Israel by the secularization and historicization of Europe and which came to a head in the nineteenth century was reminiscent in its underlying pattern to the amphictyonic crisis of 1020 B.C.E. Once again history threatened to overwhelm myth from without. And once again, the mythic reality avoided being murdered by consenting to commit at least partial suicide. The dialectical pendulum, held steady for two millennia, began its swing from myth to history and as always the principal category to be redefined was that of the Kingdom, the central metaphor of Jewish existence.

Zionism provided the redefinition of Rabbinic Judaism by means of which Israel as Israel leaped out of myth and into history. Heteronomy (seen as slavery by the historicist mind) gave way to autonomy; mythic rest (stagnation as far as history is concerned) yielded to dynamic historical action; transcendental self-understanding (illusion to history) dissolved before immanentist definitions of a purely earthly-historical character. Zionist man was a Jew, but in being a Jew, he became like everyone else, a citizen of a nation, the ultimate state of human normality as conceived by the nineteenth century mind. What was unique was not the Jew at all but his condition; for he alone of all national-historic entities was not situated in a nation-state. The task was thus clearly laid out, a purely political and social task, an historical task. The Jew, like all other nationals, being entitled to a nation-state of his own, must set out to win it. That nation-state would provide for this man among men freedom both from persecution and for self-realization by at once removing the constraints of anachronistic mythology and providing the means of communal self-defense. In short, the Jew would, in Herzl's words, be "normalized," becoming no better or worse, because no different, than any other man.

It is perhaps no accident that this movement took its name from the mountain upon which David had erected his royal city. Once again Zion, now the root of a modern ideology's title, has come to signify Israel as an historic entity "like the nations" but most unlike the mythic Kingdom of God. And once again the prophetic voices will be heard calling Israel back to its mythic vocation.

But are these the only alternatives?

B. The Kingdom as Creation

1. The Jewish Road to the Kingdom

Today, Jewish self-understanding stands confronted by a choice without precedent in its experience. Heretofore, the myth/history dialectic of the Kingdom has provided a familiar if turbulent pattern for Israelite self-conception. Where one failed the other was always waiting in the wings to act as dominant metaphor until conditions made a reverse movement necessary. During the larger part of the Jewish past it has been the myth that provided the dominant symbol system of Israel's life. This was to be expected since this myth was in its unique structures and equally unique all-encompassing nature an original creation of Israelite theology. It was especially noteworthy for the dynamic spirit of growth and change it originally manifested. However, it soon became clear that, while this myth was singular in its sense of linear movement, it conceived of this movement as a temporary condition ultimately yielding to a fixed state of being identified as the Kingdom of God. Whether Mosaic or messianic, the pattern was the same: movement for the sake of fixity, a fixity which, once established, would be threatened by the very dynamic forces which had brought it to realization. Thus, this myth, like others, ended by closing itself off from the growth and movement which are the essential characteristics of human life. So myth becomes mythology and a once-vigorous expression of human/Divine interaction is reduced to the arteriosclerotic leftover of a passed age.

At such moments in Israelite experience, the historical reality asserted itself and produced an essential shift in the categories of

Israelite self-understanding. Once again, the power to make new, which the myth seemed to have lost, was introduced in the form of historical action in the world. The release of talent and creative energy has been remarkable in such periods which seemed to promise all that the myth had denied. But here, too, the spirit of the new was not long-lived. In history the sense of novelty can soon be dulled so that the promise of the new becomes only the threat of the more--more of the same. Man's delight with his own ability to realize his goals leads him to repetitive realizations of essentially the same or similar goals; what results is merely a disguised form of preservation which ends by resisting all forward movement that might threaten what he has already achieved. But despite human resistance, history rolls on with man, once the pilot, now a mere passenger, and a captive passenger to boot. Historical man consequently comes to see himself as caught in and dragged along by an historical process over which he has lost control. Thus, history becomes historicism and the open future once envisioned by man is now experienced as a kind of moving box in which man is helplessly trapped.[1]

Both myth and history in their degenerate forms of mythology and historicism end by stifling the very human creativity to which they had originally given expression. Having moved from a mythic into an historic self-understanding within a relatively short period of time, contemporary

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[1] By "historicism" we mean what Bultmann has termed "historical process." Although we differ with the passage below in its too narrow view of the problem in terms of economics and sociology, we agree with the general definition: "All is handed over to the historical process which for its part is understood as a natural process ruled not by spiritual, but by economic, laws. History begins to become sociology, and therefore man is no longer understood as an autonomous being, but is seen as at the mercy of historical conditions" (Rudolf Bultmann, History and Eschatology [New York: Harper and Row, 1957], pp. 10-11).

Jewish experience provides a valuable microcosm of the more gradual secularist slide of Western society as a whole. Today, the mythic Kingdom remains a living reality only in tiny ghettoized pockets of neo-medieval Jewish life; for Jewry as a whole the "normalization" process, which is no more than immanentist self-historicization spearheaded by the Zionist movement, has left the myth behind. The result has been entrapment by forces of history more limiting than myth in that like myth they prevent autonomous movement forward, while unlike myth they deny the consolations of transcendental self-understanding Israel previously enjoyed.

The obvious conclusion that this abandonment of an age-old metaphor of Israelite existence is permanent needs little defense in an age as consciously post-mythological as our own.[1] And here is where the present condition of the Jews and all modern man is an unprecedented one. Previously the exhaustion of history led to a return to an at least temporarily vital mythic self-conception. Today, this way is barred, like the road back to Eden, by a fiery sword wielded by an angel bidding us go forward, not backward. The mythic refuge available to our fathers can be sought by us only at the price of massive self-delusion. Even if we could turn in our citizenship in the twentieth century and retreat to the never-never land of an imagined past, we would be retrieving a myth at the expense of what we know to be our own inescapable contemporary reality. Thus a modern man seeking refuge in myth would be denying precisely that truth of his own being which the myth expressed for his fathers. As Kierkegaard observed, "What is in itself true may in the mouth of such and such a person become untrue."[1] There is, likewise, no myth, regardless of its power in past ages which, in the present age, would not become mere mythology, that is, "untrue"--a lie. And there is no lie as deadly as a religious lie which, because it promises so much, disappoints so severely. The resulting despair is evident all around us. The shallow sectarian revival of the nineteen-fifties left as its monuments the near-empty churches and synagogues that have turned the American landscape into a spiritual cemetery. The extra-ecclesial, self-absorbed religious awakening of the young of the early seventies, at once more profound and less responsible, leaves in its wake, as it recedes, a blighted inner landscape; young people who, having come to see the fraudulent nature of mythic escapism, have given up on meaning altogether.

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[1] We should mention here that although Jewish existence has been largely demythologized, Jewish theology remains divided between mythic and historical schools. One might cite Rosenzweig, Heschel and Fackenheim (along with all of the Orthodox theologians) as defenders of various versions of the myth, while Mendelsohn, Kaplan and Rubenstein (together with the non-Orthodox Zionist thinkers) are partisans of the historical view. The many other Jewish theologians can, we believe, be divided between these opposing camps, with the single exception of Buber, whose humanist mysticism defies such categorization.

But meaning there must be. And if history is a trap and myth a lie, it must be sought elsewhere. As always, it must be sought in the Kingdom, for man has no other home. Not a mythic Kingdom which tells man that he is other than he is, nor an historic kingdom which reduces him to less than he is -- but the Kingdom in which man and God meet in mutual self-realization, the Kingdom which is God's because it is man's, the Kingdom which is at once present (Torah) and coming (Messiah), at once promise and fulfillment. The dominant metaphor for such a Kingdom must be creation, understood as a radicalization of the Biblical concept which "runs through and holds together"[1] both mythic and historic kingdoms. In the myth it was Divine Creation that was exclusively spoken of; in history, mere human creation. Today, the former as mythology would stifle and ultimately kill man by locating all creativity in a God who is wholly transcendent Other; while the latter as historicism would banish and ultimately kill God with an immanentist, reductionist view of man masquerading as a doctrine of autonomy but ending with the eclipse of the freedom that renders man human. But, released from the stifling cocoons of mythology and historicism, creation can express with unique power the radical hermeneutic of the Kingdom so desperately needed by an Israelite theology seeking to restore meaning to the human condition in the present age.

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[1] Soren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 181.

At this point we must clarify the direction in which we are going by defining the terminology we have introduced above. If the Kingdom present (Torah) and coming (Messiah) is to be reinterpreted in terms of a creation theology based on a radical understanding of Biblical categories, then only by dealing directly with the Bible by means of this new hermeneutic can our terms be made intelligible. We will at the same time be offering a sketch of just what a non-mythic, non-historical Israelite theology of the Kingdom might look like.

We ought not to be disturbed that our effort to develop a radical theology of the Kingdom as creation takes us to Scripture. This is no retrievalist "back to the Bible" movement but a movement forward into the new which the Bible may know something about. But ultimately the question is not what the Bible may know, but what we may come to know through it. We turn to this repository of metaphor and symbol as Western men who have been shaped by it while giving it a shape that is ever new. Much has been said of closed and open canons, of the deadening effect a closed canon can have on new speculations; but has it escaped our notice that in one vital sense--the sense that concerns us here--only a closed canon can be open--open to new interpretive efforts by those who are its heirs? To close the canon is to place it in the hands of those worthy to receive it, to open it, to make it new.

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[1] This famous phrase was used by Kant to describe the synthetic activity of human consciousness in uniting the "manifold of intuition" into an ordered "apprehension." We use it here to describe the Divine/human activity of creation which synthesizes and transcends the categories of myth and history. See Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 131.

Philo and Maimonides knew this; in breathing new life into Scripture, they released the vital forces in their respective ages of thought.[1] By reading the human situation of their day into and through Biblical metaphors they raised the level of their times and the quality of contemporary experience from the merely human to the really human. The result: new levels of self-understanding for man, new openings into the future made possible by the living present's hermeneutical efforts to unlock the treasures of the closed past. As heirs we must neither reject nor squirrel away our Biblical inheritance; we must invest. The interpretive process is a dialectical one in which we invest Scripture with the contemporaneity needed to give it life so that it can, in turn, invest the contemporary with the meaning without which human life cannot be properly so called.

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[1] It is usually stated that Philo and Maimonides sought to make the Scriptures accord with first and thirteenth century patterns of thought by interpreting them in terms of neo-Platonism and Aristotelianism respectively. That is true as far as it goes, but it is seldom recognized that these theologians were at least as interested in the reverse apologetic task: that of understanding the thought of their time periods through the symbol system of the Bible. That is to say, they used the philosophers to give rational structure to the Bible, and the Bible to give meaningful content to the philosophers. The medieval synthesis was thus a truly dialectical process which, although it may have been less than wholly successful, at least attempted to give contemporary significance to the Scriptures and eternal significance to contemporary thought. This is no less the theologian's task today.

2. Biblical Creation: The Image of God and the Image of Man

The dominant theme of the Biblical narrative is that of creation. This dynamic creative activity is the subject of the first sentence of Genesis and continues through to the last books which speak of the new creation to come, thus projecting the theme into the unrealized future far beyond the pages of the books themselves. But to speak of creation is to deal not only with the unrealized future but with the unrealized present as well, for both present and future are merely moments through which possibility passes in its thrust toward its self-realization. This realization is found nowhere in the creation theology of the Bible, which is content to deal with possibility as it is--ever unfulfilled, always pointing beyond itself, never at rest. Neither God nor man nor the world is seen in the Bible as fixed, realized being. All three are merely elements of a complex interaction which is precisely the "creation" of which the Bible speaks.

> "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
> (Gen. 1:1)

The Bible does not speak of God prior to His creation of the world. The Biblical God is always God *of something*.[1] Logically, a

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[1] The model we are working with is a theological adaptation of Husserl's doctrine of "intentionality" as the structure of human consciousness which is always "consciousness of something," "transcendental consciousness." This revolutionary idea is the starting point of Husserl's "pure phenomenology" which is the often-overlooked philosophical parent of contemporary existentialism. Husserl's doctrine was

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creator is only a creator if he creates. Thus, his creation creates him as a creator even as he creates it as his creation. God requires a world for Him to be God of. He is as dependent upon it for His existence as God as it is dependent upon Him for its existence as world. Without the world, God is no God; without a creation, He is no creator. Thus, the "BEGINNING" of which the Bible speaks is not only the beginning of the world but is also God's own beginning as God, the act of primal creation is that of God's own self-creation as creator which necessarily entails the creation of a world as a creation. As there can be no world without God, there can be no God without a world. God and the world look to each other for their source of existence. They exist in each other as the marks of their respective transcendent thrusts. Where God transcends Himself, there is the world; where the world transcends itself, there is God. Neither element of the creative activity is independent of the other. Each understands itself and has its being in the other. Each arises out of the primal act of creation which creates them both.

Thus, to speak in terms of Biblical creation is to use the language of self-transcendence and projected possibility, of flux and motion and dynamic interaction. There is no stable element, nothing content to be what it merely is; all points beyond itself and all being

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itself a development of Franz Brentano's theory of the "intentional inexistence" of mental phenomena which he, in turn, ascribed to the scholastics of the Middle Ages. The present study is founded on our conviction that a radically reworked intentional model can be the basis of a new understanding of the God-man relationship in the Bible and in the contemporary age. See Edmund Husserl, Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1931), p. 118 and Brentano's essay: "The Distinction Between Mental and Physical Phenomena" in Roderick M. Chisholm, ed., Realism and the Background of Phenomenology (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1960), p. 50.

is dependent on its own possibility which projects itself as creation of the other which is, in the same projection, an act of self-creation.

> "So God created man in His own image."
> (Gen. 1:27)

The God of the Bible is the God of man. But, it is man who makes Him his God. Man cannot be in God's image without God being in man's. In creating man, God creates precisely that creature who to be man must create God--as God, to be God, had to create man. God is man's image as man is God's. Without man God could not be what He is;[1] without God, man could not be himself. Without God, no man; without man, no God. The being of God is not in God but in man--as the being of man is in God.[2] In themselves they have no meaning--they are nothing;[3] the meaning of each arises in the necessary relation of mutual creativity.

There is no room here for self-sufficiency either of man or of God. We are not speaking of two "beings" who are related in such and such a way. We have in mind the existential notion of man's being as a becoming, man's "is-ness" as that which he is not.[4] Man is man because he is not what he is as a "this" or a "that"; man is not a something, but a nothing--not a thing or an item or a fact. He is a projection toward his own possibilities. He "is" as man only insofar as those possibilities remain his--yet forever beyond what he is at the moment. Man reduced to what he is at the moment is not man. Man without his possibilities, without his projections beyond himself--those projections which, in fact, constitute his self--loses precisely what makes him human. Such a man is inconceivable; such a man would not be man. Man's very being, then, his essence, is that he points always beyond himself. And what is beyond man is God.

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[1] For the germ of this idea we are indebted to the incomparable Meister Eckhart who wrote (in the fourteenth century!): "God's divinity comes of my humility, and this may be demonstrated as follows. It is God's peculiar property to give; but he cannot give unless something is prepared to receive his gifts. If then I prepare by my humility to receive what he gives, by my humility I make God a giver. . .without a taker he cannot be a giver. . .That is why it is true that by humility I give divinity to God." See Meister Eckhart (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941), p. 234.

[2] "I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

[3] " 'You are my witnesses,' says the Lord" (Isa. 43:10). To which a Rabbinic tradition adds: "If you are my witnesses, I am God; if you are not my witnesses, I am (so to speak) not God."

[4] For the most complete formulation of this theory of human existence, see Jean Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), pp. 73-220.

The Biblical doctrine of creation and of man as the image of God conceives of God and man as the symbols of each other's self-projection as Possibility. Further, each is seen as the essence of the being of the other since each is totally defined as existing only insofar as each projects beyond what it is. Projection--"creation" in Biblical language--is what each is and neither is subject to definition or limitation. Since man and God share the same image--which is that no final image can be drawn for either of them--whatever can be said of man can also be said of God--and must be. The God in whom there is nothing of the human is no God; the man who does not bear the mark of divinity is no man.[1]

This is not to say that man and God are identical. Possibility--whether human or Divine--is always Possibility and, as such, cannot be realized. That which is outstanding in the human reality must remain outstanding or the human reality ceases to be human. God is not something man can become but is rather the sign that as self-projection he remains human in not being merely what he is. God speaks to man of what he is as possibility and of what he is not as quantifiable fact. God as that Possibility which is always outstanding for man offers man a meaning for the world which is precisely its lack of meaning. For the meaning of man is that he is empowered to bestow meaning on the world by projecting the human towards and into it.[1] The world, in fact, will be just what man projects. This is what the Bible is saying in speaking of man as God's image.

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[1] For an early modern expression of this insight, see the writings of that remarkable thinker who knew himself to be the theological emissary of a future beyond the vision of his contemporaries: Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), pp. 1-32.

Man is that kind of creature who is a creator--a creator of meanings which give rise to new facts. The human meaning projected and bestowed by man on the world is God. This bestowal is not a separate act for man. It arises out of his initial relationship to God. For, where God and man meet, there is the world. The world is identical with creation in its wholeness and fullness--an ongoing eternal creating in which man and God shift and grow in a continual interrelationship of perpetual becoming.

And yet the Biblical text tells us that:

> "God finished the work that He had created."
> (Gen. 2:2)

But, to be finished is not necessarily to be completed. In creating man God placed in the world all its future possibilities. All possibility will now be man's. The world's future is in his hands--

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[1] We build the meaning:
A Church for all
And a job for each
Each man to his work.

T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), p. 99.

as is the fate of God Himself. Thus, God places man in Eden as lord of all creation which is now placed in his power. Man's presence in the world is the ground of all future possibilities. In that all possibility will be man's, the creation is finished. But, for man to be man, Possibility as such must always be outstanding (regardless of how many particular possibilities may be realized), thus creation will never--can never--be completed. It is the projection in Possibility of the interrelation between man and God as it moves forward in perpetual self-transcendence.

The Bible pictures man and God as growing together in encounter after encounter. This Biblical God is clearly made in man's image. He is "pleased," He is "saddened"; He "remembers," He "changes His mind."[1] In short, He is subject to all the contradictions so obvious in man's nature. That such a statement can shock us today simply illustrates how far we have come from the images of man and God found in the Bible's creation theology. We hunger for the absolute; the Bible refuses to reveal it to us. We yearn for certainty and fixity; the Bible will not speak in such terms. A radical Biblical theology of creation has little comfort for those who seek a reprieve from being human, a rest from the effort of ongoing self-creation imposed upon us by the Biblical God.[2] So considered, the Bible is not a source of rest and comfort, but a call to perpetual striving, a warning against systems which seek to define and contain us, and a reminder that what we are is always lying before us in a future which will be precisely what we make it.

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[1] The Biblical Flood story is notable for its profoundly human portrait of the emotional inner life of God. See Gen. 6:5-9:17.

[2] The Lord who created must wish us to create
And employ our creation again in His service
Which is already His service in creating.

Eliot, p. 111.

These elements of Biblical theology can be found throughout the text. As we have stated, the logic of the creation story leads us to posit a God who depends for His being on the world (no Creator without creation) as it depends on Him for its being. Thus God's reality is not prior to creation but expressive of it. To speak of what God may have been before He created is like asking what man might be before he projects his own possibilities. But, such a question is itself meaningless since man is not man save for that projection. Neither is God God without His projection which is the creation. There can be no question of prior existence if the very existence in question is identical with its own self-projection. Thus to say "man is created in God's image" is identical with saying "God is created in man's image." Neither God nor man can be given temporal priority since each exists only as the other's Possibility. Further questions along this line betray the questioner's confusion of theology with history. We are speaking here not of an historical sequence of events but of the formulations of the Biblical imagination which sought to account for the peculiarities of the self-transcending human reality[1]--a reality which has not changed precisely insofar as it never ceases to change, thus revealing its structure as perpetual self-projecting possibility.

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[1] For our ability to read the Bible in this way, contemporary theology owes a profound debt to the brilliant demythologizing (and dehistoricizing) work of one who may well prove to be the greatest theologian of our century. For this approach to the Biblical text, outlined with brevity and power, see Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958).

We find this view of man and God dominant through the stories of the Patriarchs. Each encounter between them and God alters both participants. These encounters are usually described in terms of a covenant--an agreement in which each party is bound by the conduct of the other.[1] There is no question here of unilateral Divine pronouncement. If man acts in a given way, then God will respond accordingly. Insofar as God exists only in this relationship, He has placed His own fate in the hands of man. It is not enough that He call Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in order to become their God; they must hear Him. The covenants contain the possibilities of both God and man, but their realization depends entirely on man since God has bound Himself to react in accordance with man's actions which are in no way determined. Man is, thus, freed by God to create himself and God according to his own will.

We see this theme carried into the Moses narratives when the prophet, standing before the burning bush, asks to know God's name that he might proclaim it to Israel. God's response is hardly what we would consider an adequate answer. "I will be what I will be. And He said, 'Say this to the people of Israel, 'I will be has sent me to you.' "[2] Moses had asked for God's name which, in the Bible, signifies and entails the essential being of a thing. But God is no thing. In response to Moses God offers a self-definition which is precisely the sort of non-definition of which we have been speaking. He speaks of Himself in terms of future possibility, of what is outstanding, rather than of what is. God is what He is not--not yet, not ever. What He "shall be" is placed in Moses' hands. Thus He must send Moses down to free the Israelites from their identity as slaves (their self-definition in reductionist terms) among the "fleshpots of Egypt," and bring them up to Him where they can freely choose to be His people. Then and only then will He become their God--a God Who is at once the power by which and the Possibility in which man moves toward realization of his human possibilities.

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[1] The covenant with Noah: Gen. 9:1-17.
The covenants with Abraham: Gen. 15:1-20, 17:1-14.
The covenant with Jacob: Gen. 32:24-32.

[2] Ex. 3:13-18. This translation is a departure from the RSV.

Can we not see here another instance of what God "will be" being placed in the hands of man? Possibility is the Divine image of man; possibilities constitute the human image of God. God acts His possibilities, and what those possibilities will be is up to us, for they are inseparable from our own--as the God of Israel is inseparable from Israel as the people of God.[1] Consider the story of Jacob:

> And Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day.
> (Gen. 32:24)

The story opens with a simple descriptive statement--or so it would seem. But if we attend both to the language and the contextual situation we find that what is going on here is far from simple. The scene is set at night. It develops in an abrupt staccato fashion, strange even for the Bible which often seems to follow a logic all its own. The nighttime setting reminds us of a previous nighttime experience Jacob underwent: the famous dream of the stairway between earth and heaven upon which angels moved in perpetual procession forming a living, moving, connecting stream (mutual self-projection) between man and God. The fact that this new experience also occurs at night should prepare us for the possibility that this, too, may be a dream.

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[1] "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel, I am God over all who come into the world, but I have only associated My name with you. I am not called the God of idolaters but the God of Israel."
(Exod. R. 29:4)

The sudden appearance of the "man"--he does not approach or arrive in the usual sense--in the same sentence with the statement that Jacob is alone presents the immediate possibility that Jacob is wrestling with himself. We may not be amiss in identifying this conflict as one between Jacob and Possibility out of which emerges--as we shall see--new possibilities, both human and Divine.

Even if we take this "man" to be, in some sense, Jacob himself--or better, Jacob as self-projection, we must deal with the description of him in the text. These descriptions vary and develop as the tale unfolds. Who is this mysterious antagonist? The text describes him only as "a man," but Jacob demands to know more. As they struggle, the "man" finds that he cannot prevail over Jacob although he wounds him in the thigh. Jacob holds him fast and refuses to free him unless he "blesses" him. The man asked, " 'What is your name?' And he said: 'Jacob' and he said: 'Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but ISRAEL; for you have striven with God and with man,[1] and have prevailed.' " (Gen. 32:27-28).

Thus Jacob receives a new identity which refers to his projection toward God seen here as a confrontation of antagonists. Jacob--man--is identified with this projection. In it he becomes what he is--he who strives with God, who points to that Possibility which is his, yet forever beyond him. In this process--symbolized here as the giving of a new name--Jacob is recreated and emerges from the struggle as a new human self which was latent as possibility within the old man. The projected possibility of Jacob is Israel; the projected Possibility of Israel is God.

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[1] I am departing from the RSV in translating *anashim* as "man" in the generic sense, rather than "men." The parallel is clearly with *Elohim*, also plural, but in this context obviously to be translated as "God."

This episode is merely one moment of the continuous creation story within the Bible. It tells us that for man, to wrestle with himself is always to wrestle with God. In this, like Jacob, we are "blessed"--in being, by our very self-transcending constitution, necessarily tied to God as our own ultimate Possibility. We are with God and towards God in that we are forever beyond ourselves in a projection which is at the same time identical with our self.

But there is more to the story. ISRAEL is interpreted as meaning "contending with God and man." (However, the Hebrew can also be read "God contends.") The ambiguity remains; we still have no more than clues to the identity of the other. He is God or man, to be sure, but which one? This ambiguity is clearly deliberate and may indicate that each entails the other. Where God contends, so does man; for God can only contend with man, as man can contend only with God. All striving is striving with self, and all striving with self is striving with God. Where man is, there is God. It is in God, in striving toward this other, that man finds and becomes himself.

It is interesting that following the bestowal of Jacob's new name, he asks his antagonist: " 'Tell me I pray your name,' and he said: 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him" (Gen. 32:29). The text has stated that this was a "man"; he himself refers to himself as "God and man"; and now he refuses altogether to answer Jacob's direct question. Or perhaps he feels it has already been answered, that his identity is contained in the new identity given to Jacob. For Jacob's new name of ISRAEL also means God-who-contends. It will henceforth be impossible to utter the name Israel without speaking the name of God (El). And it is clear that Israel is to be understood as a verb as well as a noun, a verb expressing the ongoing struggle with God that characterizes the lives of all Israelites, all truly human beings. God is, then, the one who confronts, strives with and completes man as man is the one who struggles with God.

But, while he does not answer Israel's question--wondering aloud what the point of such a question might be--he "blessed him there." He blesses Israel for having asked the question. It is then an open question which is the mark of man's humanity--not a closed answer. There can, in fact, be no answer for us--only a response, and the response is the blessing of humanity--of being human--of being the one who can reach beyond himself and ask the question. In the story, the asking of the question is a brief re-enactment of the wrestling match in which the question has been lived; it is merely another way of striving with God. In both cases, we earn a blessing which is identical with the striving itself.

The conclusion of the story offers us a poignant description of man's human creativity at work. Significantly, the text does not tell us that the visitor departs--as it did not indicate his arrival. We may take this to mean that the struggle described is not to be taken as a factual incident occurring at a particular time or place, but rather is presented as a metaphor containing all the elements of the ongoing creation which arises from the continual interaction between God and man.

As elsewhere in the Bible, the meaning of the experience is left in the hands of man. Following this encounter between Jacob and the "man," Israel, the new man who emerges, declares: "I have seen God face to face" (Gen. 32:30). Now, Israel has no "right" to make such a claim. Nowhere in the text are we given any factual information to lead us to conclude that this was, in fact, God. But, this is just the point; God is no fact. By identifying his antagonist as God, Israel adds nothing factual to his experience. What he is doing is choosing a meaning for himself and for the episode he has undergone. That meaning is God. In so choosing, he raises the experience to a level truly human because truly Divine, an experience which points beyond itself to a transcendental meaning beyond its facts.

As seen by Jacob, the story becomes more than it is, as in it Jacob became more than he was. All elements here--man, God, and the world itself ("And Jacob called the name of the place (any place and every place) 'THE FACE OF GOD' ")[1] move into a "new intensity," a new dispensation of being as they take on the new meanings which recreate them. Jacob becomes Israel (he is himself only in contending with God), God becomes the God-of-Israel (Himself only when He contends, as He must, with man), and the world becomes "the face of God" (itself only in that it reveals God's presence). Nothing is static, nothing remains what it was. All is alive and moving together in the process of self-realization--or creation.

What we have seen is the emergence of truly human experience, a self-projecting reality containing elements which are alive only in that they are larger than life--and which points beyond the sum of its interrelated parts toward possibilities of meaning which are man's own to choose. For only when man chooses it as meaningful does his experience become human; and only when he lives in and projects through the human does his experience reveal the Divine.

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[1] Peni-el (Gen. 32:30).

This man who is human is always more than he is. His essence is his projection beyond himself. This projection is the creation of meaning through man's own choosing of himself from among his possibilities. It is not, however, the individual possibilities themselves which alone make him human but Possibility itself, as a category, which is the necessary condition of his projections and the horizon of his self-transcendence. This Possibility which is always outstanding--ever unrealizable, is God. God cannot be named or defined like a fact or a thing, for God is never an item in the world. God is, rather, the meaning which gives rise to a world, which orders the facts of existence by calling them beyond themselves as facts, to themselves as meanings. The meaning is always beyond the fact while it is at the same time grounded in it. It is the projection from the fact which belongs to what is, yet stands ahead of it and points beyond toward what may be.[1]

This projection from fact to meaning is not itself a fact. It takes place only when man projects his own being into and through the fact world. This projection gives rise to a world of meaning and banishes pure facts which have only a theoretical existence prior to the meaning-bestowing activity of human experience. The meaning-world--

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[1] In pp. 285-94 below we will discuss this fact/meaning distinction in all existence in terms of creation and nature, human and inhuman as qualities of man's actions.

the product of the creative process which is human experience--takes shape in and through the projection of human action and human consciousness beyond itself. This world arises as the meaning which unites all facts into the totality of possible human experience. The world IS that totality--that meaning. The world is where man projects beyond himself in and toward the totality of Possibility which is God.

If we see the Jacob story as expressive of this view of human experience, the ambiguity and uncertainty of detail cease to be hindrances to understanding. On the contrary, they serve to reveal the complex interrelationships among the various elements (God, man, world) of the creation process. In this process, nothing stands alone, but all elements interpenetrate each other as they realize themselves in and through the other.[1]

Theodore Roethke said: "Brooding on God I may become a man."[2] The Jacob story makes a similar point in its symbolization of the God/man relationship as both a striving and a questioning on man's part and on God's. God and man become themselves in encounter with each other. We cannot escape God without, at the same time, denying our own humanity. Our realities are inseparably intertwined. The image of God in man is his dissatisfaction with fact, his striving beyond himself for meaning and purpose, his unease with what is given and his insistence that there must be more. God is the guarantor that there is more, while man is that agency through which the more is at least partially realized. This process of human self-realization gives meaning to the world--IS the meaning that we seek--IS God working in the world through us as the projection of His possibilities which are identical with ours. This is, perhaps, the most radical meaning of the Biblical account of creation, of man as the image of God and God as the image of man. It is certainly the message which the Jacob story offers to our age.

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[1] "I shall not find God nor even imagine him apart from myself, but as my own and belonging to me. . .God and I: we are one. By knowing God I take him to myself. By loving God I penetrate him. . . God and I are one in process. He acts and I become. . .This, then, is to be our knowledge, that I know him as He knows me, neither more nor less, but always the same. . ." (Eckhart, p. 182).

[2] Theodore Roethke, Collected Poems (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1966), p. 246.

It is our contention that, radically understood, the Biblical God exists in the realm of meaning rather than fact, of Possibility rather than actuality. In this He is like man who is also defined in terms of his own projections. The Bible makes perfectly clear the impossibility of saying anything whatever about God in any terms other than the human. This is the theme of a famous conversation between God and Moses.

> Moses said: "Show me, I pray thee, Thy glory." And He (God) said: " . .You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live. . .You shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."
>
> (Ex. 33:18, 23)

God then goes on to recite various of His attributes (mercy, graciousness, goodness, justice, etc.), all having to do with His relations with man. But, we have already been told that none of these is God in His totality. Moses asks the same question as Jacob: "Who are you, let me see you." He receives an answer very much like that given to the Patriarch. God seems to be saying that all we can know of Him is contained in our human experience of Him--which is not, cannot be, exhaustive. All we have of God is the image we create--

the image we are. We have ourselves as self-creative projections of our humanity. This is the image of God--His glory as well as man's. Moses had thought that the "glory" of God was an essential nature hidden from men. It was this that he asked to see. He must have been disappointed at not having his request granted. But perhaps it was granted more completely than he knew; for the glory of God is not contained in some primal essence but in His projection into humanity, in His dealings with man. He is God only insofar as He is available to man in His various images.[1]

These human images are at once projections of man and attributes of God. They are the standards by which man must be judged and which call us to their realization as human possibilities. But in and through them we become aware of something more--of Possibility itself which alone enables us to project various possibilities. The possibilities as individual ideals can be realized. Possibility itself cannot. It is what makes realization of particular possibilities possible, but it is not itself one of them. It shines through them all and makes them what they are.[2] It can be found only in them, but as the Possibility of which they all partake, it remains more than they. This is the face of God Himself. It is unlimited and undefined. No man can look upon it, yet it is what makes man human. It lies forever before man revealing itself in possibilities, through his various acts of projection; but it is itself forever unrevealed. To reveal it would be to realize it and destroy it as Possibility.

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[1] Feuerbach, pp. 74-79.

[2] "Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou; by means of every particular Thou the primary word addresses the eternal Thou." See Martin Buber, I and Thou (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 75.

Thus God cannot be named except in terms of His own projection ("I shall be") which appears to man in various images (Divine attributes) or possibilities. The growth and development of man require that he project different possibilities before himself at different times. These take the form of creative ethical, aesthetic or religious ideals toward which he strives. The error lies not in the use of such symbols--which is inevitable and quite proper--but in the absolutization of these human constructs into something more than they can ever be. Particular possibilities should serve to reveal Possibility without exhausting or limiting it. When possibilities are endowed with an absolute, eternal nature, they become frozen in place as facts--the "already" as opposed to possibilities' "not yet"--Possibility itself is obscured and all growth--human and Divine--grinds to a halt. Such is the case when history declines into historicism, the new becoming simply the more.

Something similar occurs when the images of God, which all religions must construct and utilize as symbolic of the stages of human self-creation, become fixed as absolutes.[1] They are mistaken for God Himself and thus lose their proper identity as images and become idols. When God is thus identified completely with the image created for Him by a particular age, He ceases to grow and becomes an embalmed corpse imprisoned within the presuppositions of the past.[2] When God stops short in His development while man continues to progress, there occurs what has been called the death of God and the hardening of myth into mythology. The God who does not become, who is not open to the interpretations of every age, who is no longer available for man to fashion new images of Him--such a God is truly dead. But the God who is ever alive is the Creator who is created by man, the creature who creates.

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[1] For a concise and profound discussion of the use and misuse of religious symbols, see Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), pp. 41-54.

[2] Cogent reflections on this problem can be found in Gabriel Vahanian, The Death of God (New York: George Braziller, 1961), pp. 14-48.

C. Creation Theology: Jewish and Israelite

1. Theology as Symbol System

As we have seen, creation is the activity proper to the Kingdom in which God and man arise, each as the condition of the other's self-transcendence or, more exactly, each as the self-transcendence of the other. The Kingdom of creation is of necessity at once human and Divine, present and coming, ever now and ever new. Here God and man are mutually dependent, distinct but not separable aspects of the self-projecting, creative movement. Man does not create in order to imitate God; he creates in that he is man, himself an element in the Divine creation. The heteronomy of mythic man and the initial autonomy of historic man are seen from the standpoint of creation as hypostasized elements of a larger totality. Man, the creature who creates and God, the Creator who is created, are both autonomous (their creative activity is self-generated) and heteronomous (that self-generating creative activity necessarily involves man and God with each other). In short, man is free to be man only because God is free to be God. More, it is only in man that God is free and only in God that man is free. The struggle to liberate man from the tyrannies of mythology and historicism is equally a struggle to free God from identification with the frozen Being of myth on the one hand and the inexorable process of history on the other.

All this is made clear in our interpretation of the Biblical account of creation, that story which combines elements of myth and history while transcending the limitations of both. If Adam is any man he must be every man; and so the Hebrew uses the generic term.[1] It would be impossible to think of the image of the universal God as anything less than universal; if God is God-for-man,[2] Adam must be everyman. And what we say of him must be true always and everywhere.[3] If monotheism contains a single great original insight, it is this: the universality and oneness of God makes possible, indeed makes necessary, the universality and oneness of mankind and the development of a common conception of what it is that constitutes the humanity of the human species. Any monotheistic theology that seeks to deal with human issues must therefore express itself in universal terms as regards both God and man. But theology has long been viewed as expressive of the particular beliefs of religious confessions. This apologetic conception of the theological enterprise has long prevailed and has produced some curious mental acrobatics by theologians attempting to reconcile the particularist claims of their parochial communities with the obvious necessity that monotheistic theology be universally applicable.

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[1] Adam is simply the Hebrew word for man. Its primary use in the creation stories is generic and it can be read as a proper name only in Gen. 3:17, 21.

[2] The two names of God used in the first and second creation stories respectively stress related themes of Biblical theology. Elohim (Gen. 1:1 ff.) is the generic term for deity, plural in form (designating omnipresence and omnipotence) yet taking a singular verb (reflecting the universal oneness and harmony of God's Being and activity). The Tetragrammaton of the second story (Gen. 2:4 ff.) is the personal name of God stressing intimacy with and care for man. If the first story speaks of man as God's image, the second presents us with a picture of God's emotional inner life clearly drawn in the image of the human. These two conceptions of Divinity combine in the Bible in the unique Israelite theology of monotheistic humanism.

[3] "One man (Adam) was created so that no man might say to his fellow, 'Your father was greater than my father'" (San. 37).

Christianity has attempted to deal with this problem by holding to one of two versions of theological imperialism. Roman Catholicism has been afflicted with an institutional imperialism which, having confused its dominant myth of sin and redemption through Christ with historic fact, went on to assert that this historic redemption could only be appropriated through the historic church. This parochial narrowness was disguised as universalism and gave rise to the worldwide missionary efforts of the Church to press its claims on all mankind. So pervasive was this institutional consciousness that even today the principal disputes within the Church center around the issue of the authority of Pope and Bishops to govern their ecclesiological domain. It is no accident that attempts at Catholic-Protestant rapprochement usually founder on Catholic demands that the "separated brethren" accept the institutional authority of the Church.

Protestants have fared little better in universalizing their theological claims. While institutional imperialism characterized Catholicism, ideological imperialism became the Protestant hallmark. Again, myth was accepted as fact; but the stress in Protestant theology remained on this point. All men were called upon to accept "what God had done for them on the cross," the only means of salvation. Not one true Church, but one true faith became the cry as legions of missionaries were dispatched to the corners of the world to persuade the unsaved that the adoption of this new,universally applicable ideology would assure salvation.

These two forms of theological imperialism seemed appropriate enough in ages during which myth and history were not clearly defined and religious truth was confused with factual accuracy. It is understandable that theology would in some considerable measure reflect the attitudes of its time. But for precisely this reason no imperialist theology could successfully masquerade as genuine universalism today. Those who continue to hold that God is concerned with whether a man attaches himself to a particular religious institution or adopts a given set of ideological axioms can only appear anachronistic to the modern mind. The ages of theological imperialism have passed.

Jewish theology was faced with the same problem of holding together sectarian impulses and monotheistic universalism. Indeed, as the originator of the monotheistic idea, Judaism felt the tension even more deeply than did Christianity. The desire to keep the idea pure and unadulterated led Judaism away from the theological imperialisms of Christianity toward the seemingly opposite posture of theological isolationism coupled with group separatism. The dominant myth concerned God and His people Israel who alone enjoyed the fullness of the God-relationship. While Jewish theology did not technically claim that salvation was reserved solely for Jews ("The righteous of all nations have a share in the world to come"),[1] it was assumed that the fullness of the Divine Presence had been bestowed upon Israel alone[2]

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[1] Tosefta San. 13.

[2] "All the peoples of the world proclaim the praise of the Holy One, blessed be He, but mine (Israel's) is more acceptable to Him than theirs. Israel declares, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one' (Deut. 6:4), and the Holy Spirit cries, 'Who is like Thy people Israel, a nation one in the earth?'" (Mech. 15).

The logic of the passage is compelling: the nation that declares the unique oneness of God is itself unique. However, the underlying assumption--that, even after the advent of Christianity, Judaism and that God's involvement in the lives of other peoples was on behalf of His chosen community.[1] The possibility that, like men, God might be capable of making more than one choice, was seldom considered. Judaism avoided racism (except during the brief period of Ezra and Nehemiah, 450-400 B.C.E.) by making conversion available to those who sincerely desired to join God's people, but fell short of true universalism by reading the entire Divine/human story as an ethnocentric myth in which the Kingdom and the Jewish community were often seen as one and the same.

Today, just as theological imperialism is no longer acceptable in Christian thought, so, too, must theological isolationism be banished from Judaism. Both errors (seemingly opposed but actually two forms of exclusivism) compromised monotheism by failing to develop a truly universal humanism. We must do better. But in what sense, then, will our theology be Jewish; and, if it is, how can it avoid the traditional Jewish pitfall of what we might call "ethnolatry" while still sidestepping

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remains the only true monotheism--is clearly erroneous and exemplifies the parochial exclusivism that prevented Judaism from fully realizing the universal humanist implications of its monotheist theology. The result was the theological isolationism which, as we have stated, was the Jewish analogue to the equally exclusivist theological imperialism of Christianity.

[1]
I give Egypt as your ransom,
  Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you,
Because you are precious in my eyes,
  and honored and I love you,
I give men in return for you,
  peoples in exchange for your life.
(Isa. 43:3-4)

How easy, how comforting it is to say "amen" to these lines and forget what they must sound like to Egyptian or Ethiopian ears. But the human price of such sectarian comfort has become too high. There is less comfort but more humanity in the following:

"Are you not like the Ethiopians to me,
O people of Israel?" says the Lord.
(Amos 9:7)

the Christian stumbling blocks of Catholic "ecclesiolatry" and Protestant "ideolatry"?

Our discussion of the Jacob story can give us a clue toward determining the Israelite element in our theology. Jacob becomes Israel. In that change, what he is is altered by what he does; or, better, what he is and what he does merge. Israel is what Jacob does; he contends with God with all that he has and all that he is; and what he has and what he is are changed permanently. But he does not move from one settled state to another by means of a rite of passage. He becomes Israel, the one who is who he is in that he has contended, does contend and will continue to contend with God and with man. His new name denotes a continuing activity which is at once self-creation of man and recreation of God-who-contends. Where this creation takes place is called by Israel Penuel (Peni-El), the presence of God or, in our terms, the Kingdom as creation.

Who, then, is the Israelite? The myth of the Kingdom saw him as unique, as subject of the Divine King as no other man could be. In the historic kingdom, whether Davidic or Zionist, the Israelite is seen as a man among and like other men. Both myth and history are correct as far as they go. The Israelite is a man like other men, but he is unique in knowing what it is to be a man. Other men are Jacob; he is Israel. Israel is Jacob, but he is so much more. Israel knows that he is what he does (his activity is self-creating), and he also knows that what he does he does in, with and through God, the always outstanding, always contending Possibility that renders him human.

The Israelite is the creative human being through whom God calls all men to be what they truly are by opening themselves to what they are not yet. Clearly one can be born Jacob, but one cannot be born Israel. Israel is the creative process of human and Divine becoming, the Kingdom in which the Israelite lives and moves with the God of Israel. Israelite theology is Jewish in the ideal sense, even as the Israelite is the ideal Jew--the Jew who answers the Divine call to creation, who consciously becomes what he always was, the chosen co-worker with God in building the Kingdom.

But if the Israelite is the ideal Jew, he is also the ideal man. Jewish theology has always recognized this by welcoming all who desired conversion into the Jewish fold, into Israel. But today Jewish theology can no longer assume that Judaism is the only path to Israel anymore than the cross can be considered by Christian theology to be the sole means of salvation. Israel is the potential of every Jacob. Jacob was a Jew: he became Israel. He need not have been the former in order to become the latter. Judaism offered him the symbol system through which he as a Jew could most readily enter into a new intensity of being. But Judaism is not the only Israelite symbol system available to man.

Today a truly universal Israelite theology must concern itself with the struggle of every man toward self-transcendence. Such a theology can express itself through the media of a variety of symbol systems such as Judaism and Christianity whose calls to creative becoming are couched in the rich and evocative metaphors of their respective traditions.

Jewish theology must partake of that universal spirit not by abandoning its traditional symbolic language but by understanding it as one tongue among the many that make up the human chorus. Until now the multiplicity of theological tongues has resembled nothing more than the Biblical Babel. But it must be recalled that the chaos of the tower was due not to the fact of the different languages but to the inability of each man to understand the speech of his neighbor.[1] One need not forget one's own tongue in order to understand another's. Indeed, only the man who has mastered his native language can ever hope to comprehend a new one.

Hillel's admonition may be helpful at this point: "If I am not for myself, who will be; but if I am only for myself, what am I?"[2] Jewish theology must retain the belief in the universal applicability of its essential truths, but cannot claim that it alone perceives those truths or that the symbol system through which it expresses them must be accepted by all. On the contrary, Jewish theology is truly Israelite only when it distinguishes between its particular symbols and that universal truth which is symbolized.[3]

If this is so, if it is the universal truth that we seek, why speak of Jewish or Christian theologies at all? Why not transcend them in a new Israelite theology of human possibility? In a very real sense that is precisely what we are doing. But at this point we are faced with a paradox; for while we insist on distinguishing the symbol from the symbolized, we find that the latter can only be grasped by means of the former. The distinction is vital if we are to avoid reducing God and man to what we say of them; but if the distinction becomes a total separation, we find ourselves unable to speak or think of God or man at all. Symbol systems there must be if we are to bring to bear upon theological issues the creative tools of the rich human imagination. Judaism is the repository of some of mankind's noblest conceptions, a treasure house of images, symbols and creative experiences without which the human community would be immeasurably impoverished. Judaism provided the original language for the articulation of what we have designated as Israelite theology and remains today its purest voice.

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[1] Gen. 11:7.

[2] Avot 1:14.

[3] The thoughts of H. Richard Niebuhr are of interest in this regard. He recognizes what he calls "the dilemma of Judaism" as a tension between the particular and universal. Our attempt to see the former strictly as an articulation of the latter might please him. We hasten to add, however, that he fails totally to see that Christianity is afflicted by the same dilemma, albeit in a different form. It is no great accomplishment to recognize Jewish religious isolationism as a form of exclusivism; it takes a more rigorous analysis to reveal Christian religious imperialism as a bogus universalism, no less exclusivist than its Jewish counterpart. See H. Richard Niebuhr, _Radical Monotheism and Western Culture_ (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 60-63.

And so our theology, while Israelite in its universal conceptual framework, remains Jewish in its symbolic expression--always mindful of its monotheistic calling to interpret those symbols in terms appropriate to the contemporary age and applicable to the entire human family.

> Yea, He saith: It is too light a
>   thing that thou shouldst be My servant
> To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
> And to restore the offspring of Israel;
> I will also give thee for a light of the nations,
> That My salvation may be unto the end of the earth.
> (Isa. 49:6)

2. Theology as Articulation of Life Experience

The task of theology is to speak of the timeless in terms comprehensible to a particular time, to speak of the totality of lived experience in terms acceptable and coherent to one aspect of that experience called thought; to speak, in effect, of the soul to the mind. Speech is then the medium of all theology; and as speech can only be articulated through the symbols and metaphors which constitute language, theology, as we stated in the previous chapter, is the verbal expression of religious symbol systems. Those symbol systems, in turn, must emerge from and give imaginative body to the lived experience of the creative encounter with God. And here we have another compelling reason for Jewish theology to remain Jewish in its symbolic language even while stressing the universality of its Israelite calling.

The Jewish people itself, not merely its theology, has been articulated out of creative religious experience. For this people represents, par excellence, the absolute unity of speech, action and being; what it says is what it does is what it is. The Jewish people, unique in so much, is primarily unique in this: that united by neither common blood nor common culture, neither common tongue nor common soil, this people is one. It was born--it became--in a series of creative experiences of overwhelming power,[1] experiences of individual and group possibility laid bare before it in the revelation of Possibility itself.

> And God said to Moses, "I will be what I will
> be. . .This is my name forever and this is my
> name for all generations."
> (Ex. 3:14,15)

This revelation of the openness of the human/Divine future liberated the present moment from self-absorption, freed both man and God from all reductionist definition and gave birth to a people. But are we not caught in a contradiction? Is not peoplehood itself a reductionism, a denial of the total human reality? How can the particular emerge from the experience of the universal?

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[1] Emil Fackenheim, God's Presence in History (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 8-14.

First of all, we must repeat that theology must articulate lived experience if it is not to become a mere flight of fancy. We said that the revelation of the open future liberates the present; it does not obliterate it. An honest theology has no room for the "sighing other-worldliness" or pseudo-mystical self-delusion of escape from the reality of the present. But to denude the present of consciousness of past and future is to make it less than it is, a living moment in a life that transcends the momentary.[1] Theology has for too long been the plaything of so-called traditionalists for whom past swallows up future,[2] alleged "dialectical radicals" for whom present and future negate past,[3] and assorted neo-mystics of the "eternal now" school who obliterate past, present and future in ecstatic moments which, in fact, deny all that makes the moment momentary.[4] Only if we accept the experience of the moment as momentary, as fleeting, can we come to see it as possessed of a meaning which is its temporal context. But that context is itself made real only by the moments which comprise it, making of it as a totality more than they are in themselves. Thus, the present can only be understood in all its integrity as a self-transcending reality, as real as the individual note in the symphony--and as incomplete.

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[1] In our discussions, here and elsewhere in this study, of time-consciousness as a continuum of past, present and future, we are indebted to Bergson's theory of "duration" which consists of

> ". . .on the one hand, as great a number of points on the trajectory as we may desire, and, on the other hand, an abstract unity which holds them together as a thread holds together the pearls (moments) of a necklace (time)." See Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1955), p. 46.

[2] A leading exponent of this approach within Judaism is Dr. Immanuel Jakobovits, Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth, who, in conversation with this writer, likened Judaism to "an infinitely precious antique which I as a rabbi, a spiritual antique dealer, must keep polished and in good repair, knowing that, like all antiques, this one grows more valuable with the passing years." The Rabbi is a great and saintly man, but his view of Judaism does seem to lack something in terms of creative growth and development.

[3] "A contemporary form of faith is therefore called to a dialectical vocation. It can only be open to the present by negating the past." See Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, Radical Theology and the Death of God (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1966), p. 20.

[4] "For the redemption of captive Israel. . .is in every respect a deliverance from the past. . .(and) the Kingdom of Heaven is not future, within time, but now, above time." See Alan W. Watts, Myth and Ritual in Christianity (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 97-98; p. 132.

So it is with the Jewish people which can no more be lost in the universal humanity than the moment can be swallowed up by the temporal flow of which it is a necessary instantiation. Jewry's creative religious encounters with God have been collective, communal, group phenomena. But the one God who created a people out of a "mixed multitude"[1] made this collectivity one in His image. We might say of Israel "what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." But such an injunction hardly seems necessary. The ongoing experiences of the one people with the one God, what it has said and done in and through these encounters, has become the very being, the life itself of the individual Jew who knows that he is more than an isolated individual. As a Jew he was met by God and as a Jew he must meet God; as a Jew he was created by God and as a Jew he must create God. This people alone owes not just the meaning of its life, but its life itself to God.

The Jew can no more forget the revelatory encounters that gave him life as a Jew than, as a man, he can forget the parental relationship that produced him. In fact, the former may exert a more powerful demand on him than the latter. In a very real experiential sense, the Jew has been a Jew longer than he has been an individual man. Perhaps this is what Rosenzweig meant when he said that while for the Christian the second birth (of the spirit) follows the first (physical) birth, for the Jew the second birth, so to speak, precedes physical birth, having taken place at Sinai more than three millennia past.[1] We might add to this observation another of our own which may illumine both Jewish self-conception and an important point of distinction between Christianity and Judaism. To become a Christian is to become a new creature, a "babe in Christ." To become a Jew is to become very, very old, to appropriate for oneself, in an experience not of conversion but of temporal absorption, the entire experience of a people with its God. But as this people and this God are acknowledged as one's own, the call to new life is heard, and the burden and joy of the old/new covenant is accepted.

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[1] Ex. 12:38.

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[1] "The rebirth of the Jew--and it is of him that we are here speaking--is not his personal one, but the transformation of his people for freedom in the divine covenant of revelation. On that occasion the people experienced a second birth, and he in it, not he personally as an individual. . .Henceforth the individual is born a Jew. He no longer needs to become one in some decisive moment of his individual life. The decisive moment, the great Now, the miracle of rebirth, lies before the individual life." See Rosenzweig, p. 396.

This passage presents us with the same difficulties as all of Rosenzweig's thought. The originality and creativity of this thinker are of staggering dimensions; however, here, as elsewhere, he becomes so caught up in the heavily mythic content of his theology that he neglects certain experiential realities in the life of the Jew. He is correct in holding that in a crucial sense one is born a Jew in a way that one cannot be born a Christian. But this does not mean that one is born an Israelite. No living faith can rest on the experience of generations past; nor, as we have said, can it negate the past. The religious life of the living individual Jew must involve his personal appropriation of the Jewish past as *his* past--a past he can make his own, however, only because the God of his fathers has become real as his God. Whether he becomes an Israelite in a life-shattering-and-rebuilding experience as did Jacob or, as is more common, in a life-long deepening of the God-relationship in the process of ongoing human growth and becoming, is not really the point. What is the point is that the personal appropriation must take place--an experience of human/Divine self-discovery in which the Jew becomes what he always was. This self-projection into the rigours of Israelite existence is at once an uncovering and assimilation of the collective Israelite essence of past, present and future creative Jewish life.

Now our intent has not been to rhapsodize on Jewish religious existence; rather, we have been attempting to explain why a Jewish theology must be Jewish if it is to faithfully articulate the experience of the Jew. As Emil Fackenheim has observed:

> If a single generalization may safely be made about the contemporary Jew, it is that he still regards Jewish survival as a duty, to be performed whether he likes it or not. He may not have the slightest idea why it should be a duty; he may even consciously reject this duty. Still, he feels it in his bones.[1]

As with the moment in time or the note of the symphony, the Jew has absorbed into his very being the context out of which he is articulated. Whether or not he understands or actively affirms that context, he knows that to deny it means self-destruction. Thus, if he fails to understand his Jewishness, he fails to understand himself.

Something similar might be said of the attitude of the world toward the Jewish presence in its midst. Hostility toward Jews and Judaism has in the Western world provided continuing evidence of the failure of Christendom to understand Christianity. The conviction that the redemption of the world had been completed as well as initiated on the cross led Christians to react with fury to Judaism's stubborn, persistently expectant messianism; while the antinomian views of Paul,[2] in fact implicitly rejected by later Catholic theology with its emphasis on works, were appealed to as grounds for the ongoing Church polemic against the supposedly death-dealing Law of the Jews.[1] These two aspects of the anti-Jewish reaction of the Church: anti-messianism and antinomianism represent a double misunderstanding, not in regard to Judaism alone, but in regard to the Jewish content of Christianity: the open-ended nature of redemption (the meaning of the Second Coming) and the need for Law to govern the lives of men until that redemption is complete (the new covenant code of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount).[2]

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[1] Emil Fackenheim, Quest For Past and Future (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 125.

[2] "For Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified" (Rom. 10:4).

We must conclude, then, that for the sake of the Jewish individual, Jewish theology must continue to be Jewish so that he who continues to be Jewish "in his bones" will be offered a voice and an arm so that what he says and does can once again become the conscious expressions of what he is. But it is not alone to the need for Jewish self-understanding that Jewish theology must address itself. As we have said, Christianity misunderstands Judaism precisely to the extent that it misunderstands itself. The witness of Jewish thought and existence as expressive of the creation theology of the Kingdom must be Israelite in its universal application. Thus it is also for the sake of Christianity and the Christian individual who seeks creative self-understanding through his own symbol system that Jewish theology must be faithful to itself. It may well be that through contact and interaction with the Jewish witness with its stress on Law (Torah) and open-ended redemption (Messiah), Christianity will rediscover and re-emphasize these oft-neglected themes within its own Israelite tradition.

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[1] The strangest expression of this continuing Church attack on the Jewish Law is found in the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea who distinguished between "Hebrews" such as Abraham, who lived by faith, and "Jews" such as Moses, who follow the "dead" Law. This fantastic formulation is viewed by scholars as an original production of Eusebius' fevered brain. However, it seems to us to be no more than a rather clumsy updating of Paul's discussion of Abraham's faith as opposed to the Mosaic Law in Galatians 3. For a summary of Eusebius' position, see James Parkes, The Conflict of Church and Synagogue (New York: Atheneum, 1972), pp. 161-62.

[2] Matt. 5-7. It may seem a bit bold to refer to the sermonic material in these chapters as a "new covenant code," but it does seem to us that that is precisely what this collection of rules and regulations for Christian communal life is all about. The author of this Jewish gospel was concerned with updating the Jewish Law to serve as a new code for the "new Israel." Barely three decades after Paul's work, the new Church was reversing his antinomian attitudes due to its growing acceptance of the indefinite delay in the Parousia and the consequent need for a "rule" or "guide" for Christian conduct over the "long haul." The practical necessity for law in human life was thus recognized quite early by the Church, although on the theoretical level it still offered lip service to Paul and tongue lashings to the followers of the Jewish Law.

Since Jewish encounter with God, insofar as it is Jewish, is group encounter, Jewish theology must affirm both the integrity of the individual experience and that of the people. To paraphrase T. S. Eliot, the God who suffers us not to be separated[1] as individuals from Him and ourselves opens a path to human and Divine self-realization which is perforce communal. If man and God become themselves in mutual self-projection toward each other, the selves they become are Israel and God-of-Israel. Now, Israel may once have been the name of a single individual; but it is no longer. Today the man who contends with God, who grows in creative interaction with Possibility, does so within the collectivity of Israel. He lives in it and it in him; he is himself a collective individual.

The Jewish symbol of this communality proper to man is Jewish peoplehood. It is as synagogue (assembly or congregation) that this people lives. No Divine/human encounter, no creative experience can call man away from his life as man among men, as member of the congregation. All Jewish theology must then be congregational theology for it is the congregational experience to interact as Israel with Israel's God. It is no accident that Jewish worship requires a quorum (minyan) of ten nor that the Talmud teaches us: "do not separate yourself from the community."[1] Jewish prayer is expressed in the plural because God reveals Himself to men in all the communality of human life. It was thus that He revealed Himself to Israel; it is thus that Israel exists before Him.

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[1] Eliot, p. 67.

God created the Jewish people for the sake of the nations as His agency in the redemption of the world. And what is redemption save re-creation? Jewry itself in its four-thousand-year-old life experience is a collective witness to the redemptive power which re-creates in every generation. If the medieval cathedral was "a Bible in stone," the Jew is a Bible in flesh and blood --a unique, living exemplar of an Israelite faith which encompasses past, present and future in an ongoing life process of creative becoming. Jewry truly becomes Israel when, faithful to its universal monotheist calling, it proclaims to the nations that what is true for the Jew is true for all mankind--all potential Israelites.

> My dwelling place will be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is in the midst of them forever more.
>
> (Ezek. 37:27-28)

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[1] Avot 2:5.

D. Jewish Creation Theology

1. Torah: The Kingdom Present

If the Kingdom has ever been the great contextual metaphor for the acting out of Jewish existence; if creation has been the dynamic Israelite model. for the process of becoming which is that existence; then Torah has offered the guidance and the goal which has kept that existence at once Jewish and human. The Torah, whether understood as Law or Teaching or Way, is the spiritual and physical constitution of Judaism and, in its largest implications, of mankind. But the power of Torah is that its largest and smallest implications are identical, or rather that all of human life, its so-called great moments together with those often passed over so-called minor experiences, are equally charged with the meaning which is Divine.[1] Why is Torah essential to all Jewish thought, and how can it be interpreted by a radical creation theology of the Kingdom?

First of all, we must be clear that we do not mean to plunge into the barren disputes regarding authorship or authority of one or another section of the Five Books of Moses. Whether Moses wrote all of them or none of them, whether specific ritual observances are binding on Jews today or should be discarded as anachronistic are not issues central to the problem of Jewish theology today. Or perhaps we should say that these are issues which can only be put in proper perspective by a deeper probing into the meaning of Torah itself and the possible relevance of such a meaning for our time. Our discussion, then, cannot confine itself to the written books of the Torah; it must, however, begin with them.

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[1] "Exercise care in the performance of a light precept as in a grave one" (Avot 2:1).

Torah and the Unity of the Human

Even a casual perusal of the Torah text must confront a modern reader with a surprising experience of what J. D. Salinger called "indiscrimination." Even the Ten Commandments, the Torah's most widely known passage, exhibits this constant quality of the entire five volumes. "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy"[1] is placed on equal footing with "You shall not murder,"[2] thus demonstrating the Torah's lack of discrimination between ritual and moral observances. God's commands are all binding and all inclusive. They range over every aspect of human life; nothing, as has been said, is "yielded up to Godlessness." What is at stake here is the totality of human experience and the need to keep that experience on a human path.

Just as all monotheistic Israelite theology must assert the oneness of humanity and just as Jewish Israelite theology must affirm the oneness of the Jewish people, so, too, must both of them hold to the oneness of the human individual and the ultimate significance of each and every act which makes up his human becoming. Torah tells us this.[3] Life is a unified fabric held together, if it is to be held together at all, by the threads of meaning we weave in our creative life with God. The Torah was the first religious text to place moral and ethical conduct on an equal plain with performance of ritual in the conduct of religious life. The earlier so-called pagan systems, with all their aesthetic power, had neglected the ethical sphere. Torah corrected this crucial oversight. But today pseudo-rationalistic and immanentist religiosity seeks to bury the aesthetic, ritual aspects of Torah under a smothering blanket of what might be called "ethico-monism." The Torah protests. The compartmentalization of life resulting from this narrow view. denies the monotheistic insight that all creation is of God or none is--man is wholly responsible to God or he is ultimately irresponsible.

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[1] Ex. 20:8.

[2] Ex. 20:13.

[3] So does Tillich, pp. 4-8.

In the terms of our theology, creative becoming is what the human is. The Kingdom of God is the context of that becoming, everywhere the human is found. The call to creative self-projection into our human possibilities in the ever-outstanding Possibility which is God, is human life in all its fullness, in all its manifestations. And it is this unity, this totality of the creation, the Divine/human encounter in the Kingdom which is the first element of Torah essential to Jewish and indeed all Israelite theology today.

Torah and the Human As Action

The second great teaching of Torah is that man is what he does.[1] The misguided attacks on the Torah as legalism or mere externalism have all missed this point. There is no secret essence of the human whether called soul or heart or motive force which can divert man's or God's attention from the all-important issue of human conduct. The curious brand of immanentism/idealism which seeks beneath man's actions for a meaning above them can have no useful place in a contemporary theology concerned with life lived in the world. Our theology must, like man himself, be without excuses. Torah allows us none. We must live what we are, and we can be nothing other than the life we live, the life of action. Salvation by works? So be it! We know (even if Paul did not) that works--human works, Divine works--are never dead. On the contrary, they are life itself. And any theology that looks elsewhere for meaning is, by our definition, precisely dead.[1]

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[1] "The *I* is the ego as the unity of actions." See Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego* (New York: The Noonday Press, Inc., 1957), p. 60.

Now we are aware that we must tread carefully here lest we be accused of attempting to obliterate the inner life of man. Such is not our intention. On the contrary, Jewish tradition is one in its stress on a good heart or good will as the proper accompaniment of good action. Love of God, rather than hope for reward, should be the internal ground for works in the external world.[2] Each

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[1] Judaism is often called a faith of action. This is quite true; it is the mitzvah, the deed done in fulfillment of a Divine command that is the distinctive characteristic of this religion. The theory is that if holiness is not the motive for the mitzvah, it will be its result. Thus the value of the deed does not depend on the state of one's inner life; rather, the inner life is changed and made holy by holy deeds. The typical Jewish prayer begins, "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who makes us holy through Thy commandments (mitzvot). . ." This theory of the holy act leading to a holy life is strikingly similar to Aristotle's belief that "moral virtue, like the arts, is acquired by repetition of the corresponding acts." See Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 28.

[2] "Be not like servants who minister to their master in order to receive a reward; but be like servants who minister to their master without expecting to receive a reward. . . " (Avot 1:3)

Sabbath the Jew prays: "purify our hearts to serve Thee in truth,"[1] always recognizing that if we are to keep the commandment to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might,"[2] it must be with the help of a power beyond ourselves.[3] We cannot purify our own hearts or love God with all our being, and this realization is the cause of the agony of religious existence. God asks of us so much more than we can give--we who must ever stand before Him without sham or pretense as those "who chose thee and oppose thee."[4] The spirit of man is a broken spirit, divided against itself--the human ever struggling with the inhuman, the natural, unredeemed man ever at odds with man as the created and creatively human.

Paul's promise of a "new creation"[5] is not for us--not for the whole man in his broken condition. What Paul has done is to focus on man as becoming--as creation. And indeed it is always man as creation--as human--that is the focus of the Israelite hope. But, sadly, it is an illusion to speak of man's totality as already redeemed or even as wholly redeemable in the future. The first illusion is characteristic of Christianity;[1] the second of Judaism.[2] We will have more to say of this below in our discussion of messianism. At this point, we need only repeat that a wholly pure inner life is not really among man's possibilities. It stands before him--ever before him and ever beyond him--as constitutive of that Possibility which is always outstanding, calling us to the horizon of our becoming--ever receding even as we struggle toward it.

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[1] Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book (New York: United Synagogue of America, 1973), p. 27.

[2] Deut. 6:5.

[3] The idea that God Himself must act in us to enable us to "serve Him in truth" is strikingly similar to Paul's statement that we can only pray wholeheartedly if the Holy Spirit prays through us (Rom. 8:26).

[4] Eliot, p. 65.

[5] "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5:17).

We ought to make clear at this point that we do not quarrel with Paul's thought because it differs from Judaism but because we believe that it does not reflect the lived experience of man's religious life. The brilliance and originality of Paul's ideas are not in question.

It is, we believe, because the Torah recognizes this inner brokenness of man that it ultimately concentrates its attentions on action. The alternatives are a despair resulting in escape into illusion[3] or an escape into illusion ultimately leading to despair.[4]

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[1] ". . .it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; . . ."(Gal. 2:20).

[2] "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26).

Interpreted as the Divine promise of aid in our struggle of ongoing human becoming, this verse can be meaningful to a contemporary theology. However, as the assurance that someday the battle will be finally won with an ultimate human victory over the inhuman in man, these words of Ezekiel are only marginally less illusory than those of Paul quoted in the footnote above.

[3] "Wretched man that I am! Who will save me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:24-25).

Paul's despair leads him to declare that the battle against sin has already been won--an illusory conclusion.

[4] We have in mind the many young people who attempt to escape from worldly pressures by joining one of the currently fashionable pseudo-Eastern meditation movements. Most of them soon discover that they cannot shut the world out by shutting themselves in. Their dabbling in illusion thus leads them inevitably to despair.

Let us be clear on this point; the Torah does not suggest that we seek to leap beyond the inner agonies of religious consciousness in a distracted, willy-nilly flight into worldly activity. What it does insist upon, however, is that we not obsess about our divided condition but accept it in sorrow; and having done so, make this self-acceptance the ground for acceptance of our equally broken neighbor. Considered in this way, the binding tie between inner religious experience and outer religious action is securely established. For once I have experienced the depth within myself, I cannot fail to seek it in my fellow man. Ultimately, then, God commands us to "dwell in the depths"[1] so that, emerging from them, we can strive to keep His greater commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself."[2]

Such love is the human quality which attaches itself to creative action in the world. Such action constitutes the life of the human--the Israelite existence of redemptive works, of Torah as guide from the fleshpots of the natural into the promise of creation. In its sharp focus on human life as action, the Torah offers us a second great theological and existential truth.

Torah and Action: Human and Inhuman

But Torah as Law, as guide, reveals even more than the unity of human life and its dynamic. Torah tells us that to be one with itself, the human must act in a humanly self-creative manner. Every act of man is not necessarily a human act. Torah demands the total humanization of mankind, that is, the total humanization of every act of every man. We need only look about us to see that such a state does not today exist. Human becoming is not a continuous process of uninterrupted human progress. Torah reveals the broken state of the human reality; it tells us of what we would like to forget; it brings us face to face with the inhuman. But if we are correct in identifying human being with human action, we must see that Torah also gives us the creative tools to fight for the human alternative.

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[1] Jer. 49:8.

[2] Lev. 19:18.

In forcing us to confront sin (the inhuman), the Torah prevents our theology from succumbing to contemporary temptations to promethean delusion--from identifying man with God. If our humanity is synonymous with the thrust toward and realization of our possibilities, then we must understand that humanity as finite. Our possibilities are limited, according to some, by death,[1] to others by the very act of choice which forces us to choose one possibility over another.[2] But however this limitation comes about, limitation it is. Human finitude is an essential insight of Israelite theology. The ultimate totality of Possibility is God in Whom and with Whom and through Whom we realize our limited possibilities. The existentialists not withstanding, Torah tells us that it is man's sin that is the cause of his finitude. The primitive myth of Eden is perhaps the most contemporary of Torah lessons. By refusing to become himself, *more* than he is, man reduced himself to *less* than he was. By saying no to co-creation with God, Adam denied his own self-creative humanity. And so do we all. Torah teaches us the all-important distinction between self-creative and self-reductive acts, between human and non-human possibilities, between the exaltation of the image of God and, its only opposite, sin. Torah as Law, as guide, as the constitution of the human, is the realization that distinctions must be made, that man is not God, that every act is not by definition creative, that man can deny himself and his God at least as easily as he can affirm himself as the creature who creates by imaging forth his God, the Creator who is created.

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[1] "When, by anticipation, one becomes free for one's own death. . . one is liberated in such a way that for the first time one can authentically understand and choose among the practical possibilities. . .which are determined by the end and so are understood as finite. . ." See Martin Heidegger, Being and Time (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 308.

[2] ". . .human reality would remain finite even if it were immortal because it makes itself finite by choosing itself as human. To be finite, in fact, is to choose oneself--that is, to make known to oneself what one is by projecting oneself toward one possibility to the exclusion of others. The very act of freedom is therefore the assumption and creation of finitude." See Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 546.

This statement and that of Heidegger above brilliantly illuminate the ontological structures of human existence. But our concerns are a bit different; we speak of finitude in a qualitative, not a quantitative, sense. The issue for theology is not that man cannot achieve every possibility conceivable (of course, man must choose some to the exclusion of others; and of course, man must die) but that the human quality of the life of possibility is limited by the inhuman. Man's possibilities are not all human possibilities; only those that are creative and life affirming can be properly so called. The tragedy of our finitude is that the human is ever threatened, contested and hemmed in by the inhuman, a quality of action reflective of the state of nature (hostile, fearful, indifferent to individual life). The glory of our finitude is that the human fights on.

Without Torah we cannot hope to build a theology in which freedom is defended against chaos (no freedom without Law),[1] in which the human is at one with itself and sensitive to all life created by God (the essence of the Jewish dietary laws),[2] in which time itself is seen as the sacred context of the human (the message of the Sabbath),[1] and ultimately, in which the human is given a roadmap for its own life struggle as it seeks to become what it can be despite the powers of sin, of nature and of history which seek to obliterate it. Thus Torah speaks of human potential in the loftiest terms. However, Torah also tells us that this is always potential-within-finitude. The inhuman can be fought but never vanquished utterly. Possibilities can be realized; Possibility remains outstanding. Thus Torah both exalts and chastens man, calling him to the pursuit of the human, but always keeping him from the delusion of self-divinization by reminding him that where God is King, all others are dethroned.

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[1] This theme is essential in Judaism. The fifty days between the holidays of Passover (liberation from Egyptian slavery) and *Shavuot* (Pentecost: the revelation of the Law on Sinai) are publicly counted in the synagogue so as to join the two festivals and illustrate the Jewish conviction that liberty is incomplete without Law.

[2] "We are permitted to eat meat, but we must learn to have reverence for the life we take." See Samuel H. Dresner, *The Jewish Dietary Laws* (New York: The Burning Bush Press, 1959), p. 27.

2. Messiah: The Kingdom Coming

Messiah is the Jewish name for hope, the Jewish term for redemption. Traditionally, this hope has been for a future state radically discontinuous with man's present, a state in which all "oughts" become the all-encompassing "is." Both myth and history have been at different periods of Jewish experience the bearers of this great and original Jewish eschatological concept.

Mythic eschatology preceded by centuries the explicit messianism which eventually became its chief metaphor. This earliest Jewish eschatology characterized Mosaic theology and was what we might call a "realizable" eschatology aiming at the establishment of God's Kingdom on the soil of the promised land. It was quickly succeeded during the period of the Judges by the "realized" eschatology appropriate to an age in which all the goals of Moses' time seemed to have been achieved. The people were established in their land under the direct rule of God; the Kingdom was present.

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[1] "To observe the Sabbath is to celebrate the coronation of a day in the spiritual wonderland of time. . ." See Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Sabbath (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 18.

The late Dr. Heschel's theological work was largely based upon his view of Judaism as a code of conduct aiming at the sanctification of time.

But with the disruption of the mythic stasis of the realized eschatological Kingdom by the forces of history, Jewish theology sought to incorporate the dynamic powers of history but only in order to re-establish the mythic order. However, the result of this shift into history was not what had been anticipated. History has a way of running away with itself and everything in its path, including eschatology. The earthly kingdom of David and Solomon was called into being to defend the mythic Kingdom against historical incursions. But having vanquished the original enemies of the myth (Philistines, et. al.), David proceeded on his own to conquer territory and erect new political structures. Conceived in terms of ultimate goals, the thought of this period was directed toward an historical eschatology in which the political order would be established and maintained forever under the hegemony of the Davidic House. This swallowing up of mythic eschatology by the very historical forces which had been activated to defend it prepared the stage for the development of explicit messianism as an element, eventually the central one, of the mythic reaction against the historical eschatology of the earthly kingdom.

In its overall conception, messianism was implicitly apocalyptic from its earliest beginnings. With the destruction of the Davidic kingdom, Jeremiah began the tradition of imaging forth an ideal age to come, on the surface, historical and this-worldly, but in its details resembling the mythic visions of a primeval paradise of other-worldly bliss. Although these early messianic projections did not include any explicit mention of the destruction of the existing world, what was pictured was a perfecting of this world so radical as to be indistinguishable from the creation of a wholly new reality. As earthly conditions deteriorated for the post-exilic mythic community, the apocalyptic elements within messianism came increasingly to the fore until the Messiah idea became the sole bearer of the Kingdom to come as future hope of Israel. In this hope, the Jew envisioned the final defeat of the hostile forces of history which surrounded his present Kingdom of Torah. The Messianic advent would mean the universalization of the Kingdom now only partially realized, the expansion of the myth in which the Jew already lived, to encompass the entire world.

The opposite impulse was, of course, responsible for the historicization of the messianic hope in the Zionist movement. Here it was not the myth that was to swallow up history but history that was to overwhelm myth. The historical reality outside the Torah myth was seen as the "normal" state of being for Jews as well as Gentiles; thus, the messianic promise could only be one of redemption from archaic mythology into the newly opened avenue of world history.[1]

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[1] "For centuries we were helpless; history was made for us, not by us. Now we have a country and a flag. We have assumed the burden of creating our own history." Prime Minister Menachem Begin, in an address delivered at a dinner sponsored by the Israel Bond Organization, July 21, 1977, New York City.

There could be no more eloquent statement of the Jewish opening into history represented by the Zionist movement. Note the Zionist assumption that man shapes history rather than the other way around.

Where messianic mythology placed all initiative in God Who would send His redeemer in His good time, Zionism--messianic history--had as its sole agent the new modern Jewish man who had decided to take his fate into his own hands.

Myth had given us an apocalyptic messianism, other-worldly and thus impossible of actualization in this, the only world man knows. History, on the other hand, has given us Zionism, a realizable and now realized historical messianism whose actualization reveals its essential limitations. Between this inflated future and deflated present, man stands in need of a new messianism expressive of his real situation as creative self-projection out of what is, into what can be.

What is needed is neither an historical messianism exhausted by the achievement of pre-established goals nor a mythic messianism equally inoperative because its pre-established goals can never be achieved. Messianism, properly understood, can be made to play a redemptive role in a new Jewish theology. And what is redemption, what has it ever been, except new creation? The error has been in thinking of that creation as a noun, a state, a goal to be reached; we propose it as a verb, a creating in which man and God are forever coming to be in action which is interaction.

The metaphor of the Messiah conveys precisely the double reality of the Divine/human struggle of man's becoming. The Messiah is both the human face of God and the Divine aspiration of man. The Messiah is redemption--new creation--personified, the symbol of the human/Divine interdependence in the creative process. As ultimate image of some final divinizing of man and humanizing of God, the Messiah never comes. But as dynamic image of the God who is God only if

He is with and for man, and the man who is himself only in and through God--the Messiah is always coming. He represents the redemption, the new creation, the becoming which is the shared creative life of God and man.

The Messiah never comes. He has not come and he is not "to come." He is ever coming, ever en route--like man, like God. The route of the Messiah is one and one only; it is Torah. It is through Torah that the Messiah is coming; it is in the Messiah that the Torah is made futurable.[1]

We must clarify. Torah is the constitution (in the double sense of that word) of the human. As we stated in the previous section, Torah 1) focuses on the unity of the human, 2) that is coming to be through action, 3) specifically, human action. Torah seen as way of life (Halakah, or path, in Hebrew) is the highroad of the messianic advent.

Messiah and the Unity of the Human

Traditional messianism viewed man as in a state of exile, of separation from his proper condition, his messianic home. This exilic philosophy of human and especially Jewish existence introduced an unbearable sense of alienation into man's earthly life while, at the same time, assuring him that someday he would inherit that rest stored up for the righteous. Now it is true that Torah was seen as providing the peace of the Kingdom present which offered a certain rest to the believer as he awaited the messianic Kingdom to come. The trouble was that this resting and waiting in Torah for a far-away Messiah involved resistance to any change of condition or development of theology that might threaten the static mythic reality, the present Kingdom which was the this-worldly anticipation of the another-worldly Kingdom to come. The Jew thus lived suspended between two myths of the Kingdom, or rather, two moments of the same myth, one validated by the past (Torah) and the other hidden in the distant future (Messiah). He lived, as all men must, in the present, no doubt; but it was a static present resistant to all movement that might threaten the mythic structure. Torah was to be observed as it had been in the past so as to hasten the coming of the Messiah in the future. Ironically, this yearning for an imaginary future prevented just that opening of the present into the real future which is the only future man can have.

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[1] We were introduced to this term by Prof. Gabriel Vahanian. It is used as a partial description of man's temporality throughout the manuscript of his latest book. See Gabriel Vahanian, God and Utopia (New York: Seabury Press, to be published, 1977), passim.

Living on two mythic islands at once--Torah and Messiah--man is both split in two and reduced to a non-temporal state alien to the dynamic reality of human existence. Life is temporality. As long as Torah and Messiah are denied temporal dimension and seen as states of being rather than as ways of becoming, man remains alienated from the temporal essence of his humanity. But, properly understood, Torah and Messiah can unify man's self-conception and make him whole. If Messiah is the future dimension of Torah, then it is this forward thrust that gives life to the present act; if Torah is the present reality of Messiah, then it provides the structure, the order, the well-worn path by which Messiah comes. What is is no longer required to resist what is coming --the present state of being need not fight for its life against the new which threatens to replace and thus destroy it.[1] This is so because our theology no longer thinks in terms of states of being, of "is" and "is to come." Every "is" is a coming--not a "coming to be" as if a distant future state of realized being (Kingdom to come) had to validate our present state (Kingdom present). The Kingdom is that which comes--that coming itself, that act of human temporality which redeems (re-creates) the human as creator creating--acting--his own life.

So considered, man is made whole again, his present no longer fights his future. Only a present which is a self-creative human movement into Possibility is a living present--it's life is its openness to the future. Man need not fear his own temporality; it is the essence of what he is. By conceiving of his real home as states here or in the far future, man seeks to evade his own humanity, his own becoming. The Messiah provides that symbol of the ever outstanding, always-to-be-realized futurability of the human that can make man one in all his openness toward that which is beyond him, yet himself.

Messiah and the Human As Action

The messianic is the openness of the human, the temporality of man. As we stated in the previous section, Torah prevents us from attending only to particular aspects of man's life. Creation theology is an interpretation of the human in all its aspects, in all its expressions. The tendency of contemporary liberal theology is to isolate the ethical from all other facet of the human, or rather to see the ethical as the sole expression of the human in man, thus fragmenting the unity of the human being. On the other hand, the new mystically oriented theologies of our time call on man to withdraw from action into meditation, contemplation or what have you, in an effort to erect an internal ghetto of the "inner self," secure against the powers of a threatening outside world. As is easily seen, these two approaches to theology and to human life offer little more than a reprise of the major themes we have been discussing in this study: liberalism thrusts man outward into the historical while neo-mysticism pulls him inward into a mythic solipsism. Surely there is another alternative.

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[1] In God's revelation to Moses in Ex. 3-4, He first describes Himself as "the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (3:6). In the conversation that follows, He becomes Moses' God also and then goes on to reveal His name, "I will be. . ." (3:14). What God has been is the ground of what He is and the necessary condition of what He will be. He exists in ongoing self-transcending relationship with man, and neither man nor God need obliterate their past in order to realize their future.

We sympathize with both the liberal commitment to the world and the neo-mystical commitment to the wholeness and integrity of the self. But we must reject the former's exclusive stress on the ethical act and the latter's rejection of action altogether. Man is what he does--Torah tells us that. Man is to "do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with. . .(his) God."[1] Justice, love, humility, all modes of action, all ways of doing--creating--human life. All these are _qualities of the human_ which humanize whatever it is we do. To do the right is the great concern of ethics; to do the right rightly is the demand of theology. We are not delving into some isolated inner world of motivation; but at the same time, we cannot ignore the quality of human action for it is that quality that renders the action human.

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[1] Mic. 6:8.

The circumcision of the heart commanded by the Torah[1] is not the inner pre-condition which validates the outer circumcision of the body, as is usually supposed. Rather, the former describes the manner in which the latter is to be done. It is for this reason that Judaism has never fallen into the trap of exalting motivation over action, of separating the heart from the hand. Circumcision of the heart is not an inner state which obviates the need for the external operation. "The flesh," as Roethke said, "can make the spirit visible."[2] In Judaism, the flesh must make the spirit visible. Or, more precisely, the spirit is the quality of the flesh--the inspirited flesh is the human.

Humanization is itself an act which must be performed in every new action we undertake. The Messiah has not come; redemption has not taken place; man has not become a "new creation." Rather, the Messiah is coming; redemption is in process; man is ever becoming new through re-creation. If, as Paul believed, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ (Messiah) who lives in me,"[3] the struggle for the human would already have been won. But the struggle goes on--Jacob's wrestling match with Possibility is that desperate life and death struggle to humanize every action. The human is never a given; it must be won and won again in every act. Gertrude Stein's maxim that "life is strife"[1] is more Israelite than she knew. The Messiah who never fully arrives will not be robbed of his messianism by becoming one with some supposed inner being of man. The question is not, as Paul thought, who lives--I or Messiah in me; but rather whether or not my acts re-create the messianic presence in the world that is, whether or not I act redemptively.

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[1] Deut. 30:6.

[2] Roethke, p. 106.

[3] If only Paul had used the words "not only" instead of "no longer," his statement would have reflected the ongoing struggle of Israelite existence.

It is man's hope that his action--his life--will be messianic: that is, creative of the human face of God--expressive of the Divine context of man's existence. But hope is not the issue; all hangs upon the act. Whether ethical or aesthetic, intellectual or emotional, all man's actions are humanizable, not once for all, but as moments of the ongoing temporal openness through the expanding present into the ever outstanding future--the messianic quality of the human.[2]

Messiah and Action: Human and Inhuman

As we stated in our discussion of Torah, sin is an inescapable quality of man's actions, forever at war with the Messiah who comes. It is the great block to human creativity, the fearsome mask that obscures the image of God.

> The Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why
> has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will

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[1] "In my long life of effort and strife, dear life, life is strife, in my long life, it will not come and go, I tell you so, it will stay, it will pay But do we want what we have got, has it not gone, what made it live, has it not gone because now it is had, in my long life, in my long life, Life is strife,. . ." See Gertrude Stein and Virgil Thomson, The Mother of Us All, An Opera (New York: G. Schirmer and Co., 1947), p. 32 of text accompanying recording.

[2] Understood in this way, Messiah becomes a quality both of human action and human hope. Thus it is the link between works and faith which are now seen as one in the messianic becoming of man.

> you not be accepted? And if you do not do well,
> sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you,
> but you must master it.
> (Gen. 4:6-7)

Sin is action of a kind which seems irresistible to man. This is made clear in the passage above as is the inhuman, beastly quality which such actions possess. The human has the power to conquer the inhuman but often fails to do so. Why?

In terms of our theology (and of the Biblical passage cited), it is as if there were a perpetual struggle being waged between nature and creation as modes of man's behavior. From its earliest moments, Israelite theology has made a radical distinction between the natural and the created. Torah is the call out of nature and into creation. Creation is the Kingdom shared by God and man, the world of Possibility which emerges in that Divine/human encounter. The messianic quality of this Kingdom of creation is its coming, its self-projective thrust beyond its particular moments into the new. The Torah projects the human face into the world precisely so as to liberate it from the naturalism that threatens to engulf all creativity.

The naturalistic view of the world is one in which "things are what they are" and, as always, that seemingly descriptive phrase conceals a reductionist definition. What is usually meant is that man is simply a part of a natural context of given facts functioning within immutable and immanentist laws of cause and effect--a world context of what is, in which what will be is simply more of the same. The law of nature is indifferent to individual existence and upholds the life of the species only so long as it can adapt to the uncaring reality in which it finds itself.

Nature's final word is death. Life "is but a brief crack of light between two eternities of darkness";[1] we arose from nothingness and into nothingness we return. Natural life is life without quality, life measured only in quantity, life in which the urge for survival for its own sake is coupled with the yearning to return to nothingness.[2] In nature, the general indifference of the life/death process is reflected in the inability of natural beings to feel concern for any life other than their own or those of other beings necessary for their survival as individuals or species. For other life--life outside the immediate circle of the herd--there is only fear and hostility. The naive romantics of nineteenth-century England and the ecological eccentrics of contemporary America might find in this mindless, emotionless pageant a fit model for human life; but for theology, the extent to which man's existence already mirrors the naturalistic view of the world has long given cause for the greatest pain.[3]

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[1] Vladimir Nabokov, Speak, Memory (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1966), p. 19.

[2] This naturalistic-nihilistic view of life has, remarkably, been worked into a theological system by Richard Rubenstein. His is much more than a merely historical approach to Jewish existence. The surrender to historicism in his thought is absolute, leaving no room for meaning in any sense Judaism could possibly recognize. His obsession with death and the abyss must place his thinking beyond the pale of Israelite theology properly so called. His writings are intriguing and terrifying--and ultimately suicidal. Of course, Rubenstein, an original in all things, might be pleased with such an evaluation. See Richard L. Rubenstein, After Auschwitz (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1966).

[3] Contrary to what may appear to be the case, we are not launching an attack upon nature in general. The indifference to individual life which characterizes the natural world may be quite proper to a non-human reality, although the Bible does tell us that the present condition of nature is the result of the Fall. Although the same can be said for man's condition, the ongoing redemptive human/Divine struggle recorded in the Scriptures clearly indicates that the Fall did not totally obliterate the human in man. What emerged from Eden was man as a broken reality in which the created

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No responsible theology and certainly no Jewish theology worthy of the name can today ignore the quality of the inhuman exhibited in so many of man's actions. How can we who have lived through the greatest explosion of the inhuman in man's experience continue to speak of the coming Kingdom of God? After Auschwitz, can we continue to draw up messianic theologies vibrant with traditional Israelite optimism regarding the human/Divine future?

Some theologians are doing just that--but they are not Jewish theologians. The German apostles of hope (Moltmann and Pannenberg)[1] fail as dismally to come to terms with the inhuman as do the American celebrants of the secular city (Cox et al.)[2] and man come of age

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and the natural meet and contend. This division within man is recognized throughout rabbinic literature:

> "Akabia the son of Mahalalel said: Reflect upon three things, and you will not be drawn into sin: Know whence you came, and whither you are going, and before whom you are about to give account and reckoning. Whence you came: from a malodorous drop; whither you are going: to a place of dust, worms and maggots; and before whom you are destined to give account and reckoning: before the Supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He."
>
> (Avot 3:1)

From such formulations derives the rabbinic doctrine of the two inclinations: the good inclination and the evil inclination which contend within man. This doctrine takes into account man's compound reality as image of God (creation/human) and dust of the earth (natural/inhuman). No honest theology can ignore either of these aspects of man's situation.

[1] Considering what has so recently taken place on the soil of their own country, it is incredible that these Germans can write with so little consciousness of the inhuman in man. Whatever the merits of their theologies--and they are considerable--this omission is without excuse. See Jurgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope (New York: Harper and Row, 1967) and Wolfhart Pannenberg, Revelation As History (London: The Macmillan Co., 1968).

[2] Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1969).

(Altizer).[1] But what the Germans choose (immorally) to forget and the Americans choose (naively) to ignore, the Jewish theologian must confront. And we might observe that if these others were less German and American, and more Christian, they, too, would be unable to avoid the confrontation. How ironic it is that Protestant Christianity, which for so long accused Judaism of lacking a radical sense of sin (sin as what man _is_ rather than merely what he _does_),[2] seems in its latest theological expressions to have forgotten sin entirely; while Judaism, long accustomed to think of Christianity as obsessive on the subject of sin, seems to have rediscovered it in all its horrific reality. Must one go through Auschwitz to conclude that the doctrine of inexorable progress has been consumed in the flames of twentieth-century bestiality? Clearly not; Barth and Brunner knew this truth.[3] If contemporary Christian theologians have forgotten it, perhaps it is because that truth became at Auschwitz so overwhelming, so unmanageable, that only the victims can bear its weight.

It is finally not memory alone, but guilty memory, that man finds unbearable. This explains the forgetfulness of Christians; but it also explains the less than adequate shape that Jewish remembrance of the holocaust has taken. Memory, like every human act, must be creative, human and transforming. The recollection of the holocaust can confront both Christians and Jews with the inhuman in all its power and monstrousness. Such a confrontation cannot be avoided if our theologies are to deal honestly with the ever-present dark side of man's reality. It is ironic that if this memory is to be a creative experience for Christian and Jew, these two Israelite brothers must recall in precisely opposite ways.

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[1] Although of striking originality--of expression if not thought content--this theologian's work seems intent on celebrating every aspect of man, the demonic as well as the angelic. See Thomas J. J. Altizer, _The Gospel of Christian Atheism_ (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966).

[2] Emil Brunner, _The Scandal of Christianity_ (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), pp. 45-46.

[3] Indeed, in its early stages, the neo-orthodox revolution in theology was largely concerned with re-introducing man to his own dark side. See Karl Barth, _The Epistle to the Romans_ (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 42-76.

For the Christian, memory must be concrete. He must remember this suffering as Jewish suffering, as suffering brought about by people calling themselves Christians, as suffering witnessed by Christendom in silence. He must remember in this way precisely because he wishes not to do so--precisely because he would rather generalize the problem so that both victims and criminals lose their concrete identities, thus freeing this episode from its place in the two-thousand-year-old saga of Christian contempt for all things Jewish.[1] He must do this not to condemn his faith or himself for crimes real or imagined but because only through such concrete identification with the criminal can he see himself as a potential Nazi--as the bearer of the inhuman.

For the Jew, on the other hand, memory of the holocaust must be more than concrete. Of course, he mourns his co-religionists, perhaps members of his own family who died for the sanctification of the name of God. He identifies with them--and rightly so. They died for the Jewish witness he also bears. Had he been there, he would have been among them. But there comes a point beyond which mourning and identification become barriers to the much more painful realization that the holocaust memory must occasion. At this point the concrete must yield to the universal. It is true that had he been there as a Jew he might have died with his fellow Jews; it is an infinitely more terrible truth that had he been there as a German, he might have killed with his fellow Germans. Thus it is by overcoming the concreteness of the memory that the Jew achieves what the Christian does by stressing it: confrontation with himself as a bearer of the inhuman. It is too easy for us decent men to identify exclusively with the victim. To do so is to comfort ourselves with our own innocence. But had we been there as Germans, would we today be capable of self-comfort?[1]

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[1] Two calm reviews of this emotion-laden history are Jules Isaac, The Teaching of Contempt (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1965) and Edward H. Flannery, The Anguish of the Jews (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1965).

The purpose of this exercise is not to dwell on the holocaust for its own sake but to respond to the challenge it poses to all contemporary theology and to Jewish messianic theology in particular. The unthinkable has happened; it was brought about by men like us--we who now dare to speak of the coming Kingdom of God. If there were no other reason to radicalize our concept of the Kingdom, the holocaust forces us to it by bringing us face to face with its alternative, the kingdom of the inhuman.

We cannot, today, claim that the Kingdom is being built at a faster pace than in previous ages, nor that we are closer to its realization than ever before. Such progressivist thinking would be incredible after Auschwitz. But we have never claimed that the Kingdom is a goal to be achieved in some future state of being. Teleology of this sort, long the hallmark of Jewish messianism, can no longer convince us in a century of horrors unparalleled in man's experience. As the Jacob story and the history of man testify, the Kingdom is not that toward which we strive, but the striving itself. The self with whom Jacob wrestled was both creator and destroyer; they met in an encounter which was at once a dance of life and struggle with death. The Kingdom of life emerges messianically only where the humanly creative act is wrested from the inhuman. Each such act must be cherished, for it represents a precious provisional victory over the kingdom of death. Man's drive toward human self-realization exists side by side with his inhuman urges, his acts of human self-negation.

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[1] It will offend many to suggest that Jews think of themselves as potential Nazis; but as men they are no less so than are Christians, who find the thought equally disturbing. The human can only fight the inhuman if it recognizes its terrible and ubiquitous reality. Some years ago, a Viennese friend, formerly Jewish, now a Catholic priest, recalled the reactions of another Viennese Jewish Catholic on the day Hitler entered Vienna. As he watched the parade surrounded by the joyous crowd of exultant Viennese, and moved for a moment by the elemental, soul-stirring appeal of Nazi pomp and pageantry, he offered a prayer of thanksgiving to God that he was a Jew and thus could not possibly become a Nazi. He never forgot that moment when, though both a Jew and a Christian, he came face to face with himself as a potential Nazi.

The natural in man contests the creative. He is forever struggling to free himself from himself, to choose the human over the inhuman. He often finds himself acting as in the state of nature--hostile, fearful, determined to reduce himself and all around him to nothingness. In asserting himself at the expense of others he betrays his own humanity by failing to assert his oneness with his human brother. So it is in the state of nature whose characteristics range from hostility and fear to an even more chilling indifference to individual life. Are not these also the characteristics of the inhuman in man? The human seeks to humanize nature, to make of it more than it is, to see it as creation. The inhuman seeks to bestialize man, to make him less than he is, to see him as natural. But the human and the inhuman are both man's; they are the qualities of his actions, either messianic or demonic.[1]

This is man's situation today as it has always been. There is no indication that things are about to or will ever change. But the Talmud warns us that if we try for everything, we will end up with nothing. And in this age of less-is-more and limited expectation, we should heed that warning. It is not the limitation of natural resources that is the great lesson of the twentieth century but the limitation of human resources. By this we mean that man's promethean dreams must be abandoned as illusory. However, the Kingdom remains when the dreams have vanished.

The twentieth century has taught us another lesson: the human may be limited, but it is also indestructible. This is no longer a pretty theory but an inescapable conclusion. If the demonic forces of this age have not finished off the human once and for all--and they have not--then the human has shown itself to be at least as powerful and indestructible as the inhuman. We know now that the Messiah never comes--redemption is never complete--creation is not the whole story. But it is precisely because of this that human life is ever open--that the Messiah is always coming--redemption is always happening--in those creative acts of man that, tentative and partial though they be, bear the liberating power of the Kingdom into the world.

Torah and Messiah call man to the ongoing human struggle against the inhuman; and if man's enemy is himself, then the struggle is that much greater, the victories that much sweeter. But victory is never complete. Over and over the command is given: "sin is couching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it." That mastery must be won again and again in a struggle "costing not less than everything,"[1] a struggle without end. But we need not despair because final victory forever eludes us. As the Talmud teaches: "It is not for you to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it."[2] The call to messianic action, to life in the Kingdom, is unconditional. It is a call to humanity to which we must respond as did those who went immediately before us who, having lived messianic lives, embraced a messianic death as they marched to the gas chambers with the words of Maimonides on their lips: "I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though he tarry, yet will I believe."[3]

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[1] I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my soul returned to me,
And answered, 'I Myself am Heav'n and Hell.'

See Edward Fitzgerald, The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam (New York: Illustrated Editions Co., 1938).

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[1] Eliot, p. 145.

[2] Avot 2:21.

[3] The Last of Maimonides' Thirteen Principles of the Jewish Faith and the hymn sung by the martyrs of Auschwitz. See _Standard Daily Prayer Book_ (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1960), p. 109.

E. The Present Age: Dying and Coming to Birth

1. Western Man's Road to the Kingdom

The Overthrow of the Medieval System

"Each age is a dream that is dying or one that is coming to birth."[1] So wrote the poet O'Shaughnessy in words that seem particularly applicable to the age in which we live. It is an age characterized by revolution and the pulling down of the old order in virtually every field of human concern. To be sure, violent innovation has been characteristic of many eras of history, but there has always been a mainstream of continuity within which the innovations operated and into which they were eventually absorbed. Thus, political, economic or social upheavals, however violent, could not shake the larger scheme of things which was seen in terms of an absolute, transcendent hierarchy of Being which moved from nature to man and on up into the heavenly spheres and finally to God Himself enthroned at the apex of the pyramid as that to which all things natural and supernatural pointed.[2]

This cosmic order was assumed as being simply "the way things were." No disturbance at one or another level of the pyramid could bring it down since it did not rest on earthly foundations but was suspended from the top. Its initial axiom was not man but God, and so no alteration in the human condition could threaten the metaphysical assumptions which upheld the whole. Seen as "a house not built with hands," it was not even shaken by changes in the religious order since the replacement of one god by another did not affect the continuing God-principle and the ideal of Transcendence which it expressed. This, then, was a singular pyramid which could only be brought down by attacking it at the top rather than chopping away at its base. Such an attack would produce an upheaval such as man had not seen and of a magnitude witnessed by no previous era of recorded history.

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[1] Arthur W. E. O'Shaughnessy, "Ode," The Standard Book of British and American Verse (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1932), pp. 625-26.

[2] For a more detailed treatment of the medieval world view which we can only sketch lightly in the following pages, see Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 67-98.

We live in the wake of that upheaval, in the rubble of that "colossal wreck" which is all that is left of the medieval world view which once seemed so secure. And yet this cosmic overthrow seems to have taken place while we were dozing, or at least not paying attention. It happened quietly, gradually, while we were occupied elsewhere. "God is dead," cries Nietzsche's madman.[1] His listeners are astonished at his excitation, not at his news, since they had never seriously entertained the thought that God might be alive. Only a living God can die. Thus it was to be expected that the madman's announcement would be greeted with the same indifference with which the death of God was itself accomplished. God died of neglect.[2] His passing was unnoticed.

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[1] Friedrich Nietzsche,"The Gay Science"(section 125) in Walter Kaufmann, Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1965), p. 105.

[2] In his autobiography, Sartre describes the twentieth century situation post-mortem Dei in terms Nietzsche would have recognized fifty years earlier.

> "Of course, our whole family believed in God, as a matter of discretion. . .declared disbelief had the violence and raucousness of passion. An atheist was a 'character,' a wildman whom one did not invite to dinner lest he 'lash out' . . .a God-obsessed crank who saw His absence everywhere and who could

Neither a bang nor a whimper attended this cataclysm which was nothing less than the end of a world.

> But it seems that something has happened that has
> never happened before: though we know not just
> when, or why, or how, or where.
>
> Men have left God not for other gods, they say;
> but for no god; and this has never happened
> before. . .[1]

T. S. Eliot is correct; this has never happened before. For the first time man has declared himself "all in all," self-sufficient, his own Alpha and Omega without need of a transcendent reference point. The process by which this new immanentist self-image of man has emerged can be analyzed in any number of ways, all doubtless inadequate to convey the enormity of the event. We can say, however, that in locating Being as something which exists in its ultimate, absolute expression "out there" in God rather than here with man, the medieval systematizers succeeded in: 1) denigrating this world by placing all meaning in another realm, 2) freezing God solid by absolutizing Him as a self-contained, self-created whole, complete and unchanging and thus, 3) producing a radical dualism in which no necessary relationship existed between God and His creation.[2] Thus man became ultimately superfluous

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not open his mouth without uttering His name, in short, a gentleman who had religious convictions. The believer had none. . .Good Society believed in God in order not to speak of Him. . .In our circle, in my family, faith was merely a high-sounding name for sweet French freedom." See Jean-Paul Sartre, The Words (New York: George Braziller, 1964), pp. 98-9.

We might add that it was just this "post-Christian" condition that enabled Jews such as Heine and Disraeli to "convert" to what passed for Christianity, due not to religious conviction but rather to its absence.

[1] Eliot, p. 108.

[2] At this point we must take issue with Lovejoy who views medieval thought as essentially divided against itself over the contradictory

in the universal scheme.

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conceptions of God as self-sufficient Being and God as Creator (pp. 83-84). Our point is that the dominant thrust of medieval theology was, quite unambiguously, that while God was, of course, involved with the created world, this involvement was not necessary since He did not have to create the world in the first place. Once told that he was unnecessary to God, man could hardly be blamed for concluding that he was superfluous--and then reacting violently against this unbearable denigration of the human by overthrowing the entire system which had fostered it.

In defense of our view of medieval theology, and against Lovejoy, we quote the following analysis of Aquinas' theory of creation:

> ". . .the possibility of a creation must be free. In fact, the pure act of being (in God) would not lack anything if the world did not exist, and it is not increased by anything if the world exists. The existence of creatures is, therefore, radically contingent in relation to God. . .
>
> Thus creation is placed infinitely below the creator, so far below him that there is no real relation between God and things, but only between things and God." See Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 373. See also Aquinas' own discussion of the matter in Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), vol. 8.

It would seem that (with the exception of Eckhart and a few other non-conformists) medieval theologians responded to the Biblical question: "What is man that thou art mindful of him. . .?" (Ps. 8:4) with the answer: "Not very much!" They should have read on to the psalm's next verses.

> "Yet thou hast made him little less than God,
> and dost crown him with glory and honor.
> Thou hast given him dominion over the works
> of Thy hands;
> Thou hast put all things under his feet. . ."
> (vss. 5-6)

It was inevitable that man would eventually throw off the yoke of such a system and declare that God, not man, was superfluous while man, not God, was absolute. Thus, the absolutizing of God gave rise to its opposite, the absolutizing of man. The medieval God Who had no need of man is now replaced by the modern man who has no need of, and is understandable apart from, God. The reality, the importance, the being of the world could not be denied forever. And once it was discovered and affirmed, the God Who had been the central feature of that system which had denied it, ceased to be necessary. Since the medieval God had been conceived of as Necessary Being, the denial of the necessity was also the denial of the Being of God.[1]

This overthrow was encouraged by the great success of natural science in offering plausible explanations of the world which had once seemed so mysterious to man. The discovery of "natural causation"--

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[1] There are, to be sure, a wide variety of models in terms of which the death of God can be understood. Here we are attempting to describe the initial overthrow (which was the necessary pre-condition for the post-Christian religious indifference we spoke of above) in terms of the Freudian model of generational conflict within the "primal horde."

> "One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the partiarchal horde. United, they had the courage to do and succeeded in doing what would have been impossible for them individually. (Some cultural advance, perhaps, command over some new weapon, had given them a sense of superior strength.) Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength." See Sigmund Freud, Totem and Taboo (W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1950), pp. 141-42.

Thus did man, long oppressed by the God of medieval metaphysics, assert himself in an act of spiritual murder--cannibalism, killing God and taking into himself (or so he thought) the power and glory of Divinity.

processes operating autonomously within nature itself--made Divine manipulation of the world--God's upholding of creation--unnecessary. The result was a deism which soon gave way to complete indifference to the hypothesis of God, as natural explanations of the origin of the world and the evolution of man offered alternatives to the Biblical myths that had long been accepted as historic fact.

It is a fact which seems remarkable to us today that until the mid-nineteenth century, world history texts began their narrative with an unabashed account of the creation of the world as recorded in Genesis.[1] This confusion of history and theology had been based, as we noted, on a mentality in which all meaning was located beyond the world in some Divine realm. The natural pointed to and was grounded in the supernatural. Nature had no independent existence but was totally dependent on the supernatural source. That source, however, was self-sufficient; while nature necessarily needed it, it had no need of nature as it was its own necessity.

But as science revealed a progressively larger area in which natural causation was discovered to be at work, where a supernatural agency had previously been assumed, the field of activities which could be attributed to God was steadily reduced. God was given as the "explanation" of whatever science had not yet explained. And as the scope of science grew, God seemed to shrink until He became totally superfluous--an hypothesis for which scientific man no longer had any need. The world became self-sufficient, having appropriated the necessity once thought to be only in God.

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[1] We are in possession of one such volume which states on its first page of text: "The books of Moses afford the earliest authentic history of the ages immediately following the deluge." See Alex Fraser Tytler, Tytler's History (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1801), p. 3.

This reversal of roles, this shifting of necessity from God to the world and of superfluity from the world to God did not affect the medieval dichotomy in the sense that all meaning and Being were still attributed to one element of the duality. Despite the all-important reversal, then, the modern world view in which man can be understood without God rests on the same pattern and is the mirror-image of the medieval view that God is complete without man. Just as He did not have to create man to be God, so man does not have to create God to be man. The dualism of the natural-supernatural schema has finally taken its toll and led from the medieval denigration of the former to the modern disappearance of the latter.

In a philosophical sense, then, God fell victim to the very system which sought to make Him supreme. By cutting Him off from all necessary relationship to His own creation, the systematizers made inevitable the day when the creation would cut itself off from Him. By treating God as all and man as nothing, they created a relationship in which man, in affirming his own place in the universal scheme, would have to dethrone God.

This seems to be the situation at which we have arrived in this last half of the twentieth century. It is a state of affairs which has been developing for some centuries. Some date it from the Renaissance, some from the Reformation, some from the Enlightenment. But regardless of its time of origin, it is very much with us in this age which has justly been characterized as post-Christian. The cultural expressions of our civilization, whether they be artistic, political, economic or even religious, simply do not take into account the transcendent dimension in human experience, that beyond this world toward which the medieval world pointed. This indicates not only that there are few traditional believers in the West today but that those who shape our culture, the more creative elements of our population, are simply unconcerned with God and the metaphysical world view.[1]

Contemporary Immanentist Images of Man

We might well ask just what are the terms of man's contemporary self-image now that the metaphysical world view has lost its power of cultural expression. The answer is, predictably, not one but many.

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[1] In the last century, shapers of culture could still lament the displacement of the transcendent by the immanentist view of reality.

> "Science! True daughter of Old Time thou art!
> Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
> Why preyest thou upon the poet's heart,
> Vulture whose wings are dull realities?
> How should he love thee? Or how deem thee wise,
> Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
> To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,
> Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?. . ."
> (Edgar Allan Poe, "To Science," The Standard Book of British and American Verse, p. 482).

Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" is too well known to need quoting here. It was, perhaps, the nineteenth century's most poignant poetic lament over the receding "sea of faith." Another eulogy for the dead God is virtually unknown and deserving of at least partial reproduction here.

> "Slowly up silent peaks, the white edge of the world,
> Trod four archangels, clear against the unheeding sky,
> Bearing with quiet even steps, and great wings furled,
> A little dingy coffin; where a child must lie. . .
> They then from the sheer summit cast, and watched it fall,
> Through unknown glooms, that frail black coffin--and therein
> God's little pitiful Body lying, worn and thin,
> And curled up like some crumpled, lonely flower-petal--
> Till it was no more visible; then turned again
> With sorrowful quiet faces downward to the plain."
> (Rupert Brooke, Collected Poems [Binghampton: Vail-Ballou Press, Inc., 1943], p. 29).

When the cement which holds the structure together disintegrates and the collapse occurs, we are left with a pile of unrelated parts, once coherent sections of a unified whole, but now broken and scattered without interrelation or any meaning beyond themselves. In the medieval structure, politics, economics, social systems, philosophy and psychology were as much parts of the total transcendental scheme as was religion itself. Since their only meaning and validity arose from their transcendent point of reference, they were never conceived of as autonomous "sciences."

Today these disciplines could hardly be more separated and unrelated. We have no pattern, no new cement with which to shape them into a unified world view.[1] Each school of thought makes its claims upon its adherents who often lavish upon it the emotional loyalty once reserved for God.

The scientific view of the universe may be dominant today if we define it as the conviction that the natural world points to no supernatural reality, that it is knowable and predictable, that its laws can be determined and its secrets unveiled. This outlook, the cornerstone of medicine and psychology, has led us to the conviction that all human experience is quantifiable. Neither the workings of the universe, the functions of the body, nor the

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If there are few such expressions to be heard from poets today, it is perhaps because it is simply too late to mourn. Time, it would seem, heals all grief--even that felt for a dead God.

[1] For a comprehensive analysis of the pluralism which, together with secularism, characterizes contemporary culture, see Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1969), pp. 105-174.

dynamics of the inner mental life are seen as mysteries but merely as problems to be solved.[1] Now this scientific manner of viewing reality does move some in the way that religion once moved our forefathers.[2] However, this is true only for a small number of its adherents. Most modern men, while sharing a popularized understanding of this world view, hardly find it a source of excitement and profound emotion.[3]

The same cannot be said for the world view of politics or politico-economics which is really closer to what politics has become today. From the Marxist with his devotion to materialist system and absolute faith in historical inevitabilities to the ultra-nationalist and his call for unquestioned loyalty to the state, the political partisan invests his efforts with all the passion of a religious crusader, which is precisely what he would have been had he been born in the Middle Ages. It is impossible to comprehend the contemporary image of man without a full realization of the extent to which politico-economics has replaced religion as our dominant view of society and most conspicuous Western cultural expression.

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[1] During an episode of the enormously popular television series, Star Trek, Captain Kirk responds to a crewman's remark concerning a "mystery" in outer space by snapping impatiently, "There are no mysteries--only problems." Those who see in science fiction the popular myths of our age should keep such lines in mind. They might also note that the starship "Enterprise" is missing only one officer--a chaplain.

[2] Albert Einstein often spoke of pure science (not applied) in the most exalted religious terms.

[3] "Religion, as I understand it, is an expression of the individual's sense of the emotional significance of the universe. . .It is useless for liberal divines to pretend that there is no antagonism between the religious nature and the scientific. There is no antagonism between religion and science, but that is a very different matter." See Clive Bell, Art (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1913), p. 82, 84.

One need not move among Mormons to hear expressed attitudes toward the American constitution reminiscent of the medieval view of the authority of the Scriptures. As on the Right, so on the Left. The campus radicals of the last decade saw the rich variety of human life in terms of a monolithic political orthodoxy so demanding and all-encompassing that it could only be compared to the most extreme and single-visioned religious fanaticism.[1]

Even the less passionate political philosophies have appropriated much of traditional religion. The faith of contemporary liberal democracy that man is perfectible and that through government action all human woes can be alleviated is comparable to the traditional view of the Church that through its agency man could be brought to eternal happiness. While the Church held sway in the West, governments were seen as necessary to hold human passion in check, as agencies to "keep the lid on" man's sinfulness. Meanwhile, the Church worked to perfect the inner man or at least to improve the state of his soul to the point where it could escape damnation. With the Church's loss of its dominant role, the government took its place and shifted its role from one of mere control to one which included the responsibility of bettering the earthly life of man and "improving" human existence.

Where the Church sought to build for men's souls mansions in heaven, the State works to build for men's bodies housing projects on earth; where the Church offered an avenue to the Angelic city, the

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[1] For a systematic presentation of radical arguments against democratic toleration of opposing views, see the book co-authored by a Columbia University professor which influenced the "thinking" of campus protesters in the late nineteen-sixties, Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore, Jr., Herbert Marcuse, A Critique of Pure Tolerance (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965).

State supplies super highways to Los Angeles; where the Church dispensed spiritual sustenance for the inner man, the State parcels out food stamps for its own secularized vision of the inner man who is now seen not as a soul but as a stomach.[1]

If the Social Gospel politicized religion,[2] social democracy and the welfare state has raised politics to the level of religion in that it now seeks to offer human fulfillment to man as the Church once did. To accomplish this, man must, of course, be defined as a "political animal."[3] Indeed, it was recently a popular saying among the young that "all life is political." What this apparently means is that the ultimate goals of life are to be sought by political means, that man's self-definition is finally a political one. For this type of thinking to flourish, there must exist a prior assumption that man's essential nature is political, that he is the kind of creature who can be totally satisfied physically by a full stomach and a roof over his head and emotionally by family, friends and the knowledge that peace and prosperity reign in the world. This vision of the ultimate political ideal differs from the religious in that it is both externalized and secularized. Somehow the needs of the inner man for something more than three meals a day, for something even more than community with others, have been eclipsed along with God.

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[1] The emergence of the "we are what we eat" school of thought was foreseen a century ago.

"But what, in these dull unimaginative days, are the Terrors of Conscience to the diseases of the Liver! Not on Morality, but on Cookery, let us build our stronghold: there brandishing our frying pan, as censer, let us offer sweet incense to the Devil, and live at east on the fat things he has provided for his Elect!" (Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus [New York: Dutton, 1964], p. 123).

[2] This movement rightly attempted to free the Church from bondage to bourgeois structures, but erroneously sought to tie it to specific social programs and simplistic socialist rhetoric. See Walter Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

[3] Note how this chilling designation combines the reductionisms of nineteenth and twentieth centuries: nature and politics respectively. The result might be described as a monkey waving an election poster, surely the "political animal" *par excellence*.

This faith that human happiness can be achieved by manipulating the exterior physical reality is the heart of the politico-economic world view. It is to human society what science is to the natural order. But it seems to have a greater appeal to men's allegiances than science since it deals with valuation and moral categories, "what ought to be," while science attempts only an unbiased description of "what is."[1] Politics, then, deals with meanings as well as facts and thus presses its claim to be the secularized successor to religion suitable for the contemporary secularized world.

However, the claim of politics to have taken the place of religion and metaphysical speculation seems to have been dealt a fatal blow by the very success of its secularist program. In the United States, the avant-garde of Western civilization, politics has been successful as nowhere else. Politico-economic planning and development have made available to the vast majority of

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[1] That this has been the case but that it need not necessarily be so is provocatively demonstrated by Abraham Maslow, Religion, Values and Peak Experiences (New York: The Viking Press, 1971).

Americans political freedom and economic prosperity only dreamed of in previous ages. The American dream has largely become reality.[1] In realizing itself, however, it has demonstrated not only its manifold riches; its very fulfillment has revealed the poverty of its presuppositions and the inadequacy of its categories.

The underlying assumption had been that peace, harmony and spiritual fulfillment would follow upon the politico-economic achievement of man's physical well-being. The irony is that this latter achievement has made the realization of the non-physical fulfillment seem farther off than ever before. Today, it could not be clearer that politics and economics are no adequate vehicles for the achievement of human happiness.

The sense of dislocation, alienation and frustration, the despair over the "meaninglessness" of life is greatest among the most affluent portions of our population. To be sure, the poor and disadvantaged are still prey to the illusion that material gains will offer them the human satisfaction they seek. But those who have achieved those gains know better. They may not know exactly what it is that is missing in their lives, but they are certainly acutely aware that, whatever it is, it has absolutely nothing to do with traditional politico-economic categories. They are, in fact, in despair precisely to the extent that they come to recognize the insufficiency of these categories to deal with human need, while they are unable to formulate new ways of thinking which might reach beyond the limited scope of these now-exhausted approaches.

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[1] In a recent Public Television interview, Prof. Mortimer Adler stressed the unparalleled success of the American economic system in achieving the hitherto fantastic goal of middle class status for the great majority of our population--a social accomplishment without precedent in past history.

The violent hostility of the sixties and the neo-mystical indifference of the seventies exhibited toward our American system by the children of the affluent society can be seen as the result of disillusionment with an approach to human problems which promised more than it could ever deliver. Now that it has delivered all that its politico-economic view of man's life would permit, its inadequacy to its original task has been painfully revealed. We are well housed, well clothed, well nourished--and yet we are in despair. Thus has the total success of the immanentist politico-religious faith (in terms of facts) revealed its total failure (in terms of meaning).

Given this failure, the question must surely be "where do we go from here?" The question is complicated by the previous failure of which we spoke--the failure of the medieval system of transcendent values from which the scientific age has separated us. The need of man for meaning and purpose in life may be a continuing one--and one to which modern immanentism cannot speak--but our homocentric, this-worldly modern universe is nevertheless all we have and it cannot be expected to yield to a re-established medieval other-worldliness. Man is important and even all-important, and no system which demands that we place either "being" or meaning elsewhere than in man and his world can speak to us with a convincing voice.

And so the problem remains one of man, for it is precisely man's purpose, man's meaning and man's destiny which seem so problematical today. Our mistake, then, in turning for salvation to a politico-economic definition of man was not in the object of our concern--man himself--but rather in the terms we chose for the definition. For in choosing categories which could not include God, we settled for those which were inadequate to deal with man. It is a sad irony that the death of God has not, as Nietzsche hoped, liberated man to be sovereign over his own possibilities. It has, in fact, severed man from those very possibilities which made him man and imprisoned him within the confines of a shrunken fact-world of scientific and political quantification. The death of God promised to make man himself God but ended by making him even less than man.[1]

The despair which is lodged just beneath the surface of man's life today is a despair of frustrated human yearning, of man's alienation from his own possibilities. In our reaction against the medieval denial of man's value, we have come full circle and denied it once again by defining man in ways which seek to prevent his thinking in terms of value and meaning. But man will not be so prevented. He feels an inner need for more than the modern world affords. He asks questions of meaning and purpose despite the reigning scientific orthodoxy which rejects them completely and the dominant political systems which trivialize them into inquiries about slum clearance and food distribution.

The Need for an Old/New Image of Man

Man liberated himself from the reductionism of the medieval metaphysic only to fall prey to the reductionisms of the modern world. He is now beginning to suspect that they are, if anything, less adequate to the human reality than the metaphysical reductionism he lately rejected. The solution for the inadequacies of one system is not another equally single-visioned formula or even a multiplicity of such formulas but is, rather, a willingness to face and deal with the realities of human experience--as they are experienced. If a series of attempts to define man have proved unsatisfactory, perhaps it is because the human reality is itself beyond definition. Perhaps our inability to systematize and quantify human nature ought to make us suspect that it may be man's nature that he cannot be reduced to nature in the usual sense of that term. If the facts of man's existence, however defined, do not add up to the totality of the human, it may be that the human lies beyond the realm of fact.

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[1] ". . .to kill God is to become god oneself. . .But if this metaphysical crime is enough for man's fulfillment, why add suicide?" See Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 80.

But Camus seems to have missed what the last century has so clearly revealed: the killing of God was itself an act of human self-slaughter. Suicide need not be added to deicide; it is implicit in it. Never was the interdependence of God and man felt more acutely than in the period immediately following God's death. The period of mourning is now over and the promise of liberation has become the reality of new enslavements as man experiences the most bitter of paradoxes: that of having outlived not only his God but his own humanity.

As we have suggested above, the insights of modern existentialism come closest to recognizing this ungraspable, indefinable reality which is man. Man is defined precisely by his lack of definition; his being is seen in terms of becoming, his "is-ness" conceived only as what he is not yet. This view of man deals with the dynamics of human existence as no philosophy has before and yet it, too, is prey to modern reductionisms such as are offered by science and politics.[1] What is needed is a view of man incorporating the existential aversion to definition and quantification while utilizing in a radical fashion the traditional symbols which were once the marks of the transcendental thrust of the human in man. That thrust, of necessity, carries him beyond the reach of political, economic or scientific definition or any of the other reductionist systems produced by the modern world.

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[1] We have in mind Heidegger's capitulation to Nazism and Sartre's adoption of Marxism. These developments were not accidental. A great weakness of existentialism is its strictly formal character; it lacks symbolic content, which it must pick up from outside. Having somehow convinced himself that the past human experience has become irrelevant to him, existential man rejects the symbolic treasure house of the

Such a view of the human as that which projects beyond itself into transcendental possibilities (i.e., possibilities which are always for man, which are seen as articulations of Possibility itself, which is ever before man) would have as little in common with the transcendent metaphysics of the Middle Ages and its reductionist view of human nature as with post-metaphysical secularist reductionism. We require a system which is precisely a lack of system, a view of man which renders all systematized views impossible. For this we need an image which will be the mark of man's freedom from definition while not subjecting man to the tyranny of a new reductionism--an image which can call man to live in the realm of his own human possibility--possibility which he must create in freedom from all presupposition and prior definition.

God is that imageless image of the human which calls man away from all earthly or heavenly definitions, which creates him as that creature which must create himself. This Biblical God Who, in His own lack of definition, depends for His form and meaning on man (who, in turn, finds his own ultimate Possibility in God), is not

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past--religion--filled to overflowing with images created specifically to body forth the human reality in all its self-transcendent glory. It should come as no surprise that the alternatives to the City of God have turned out to be Berlin and Moscow, storehouses of the symbols of the inhuman.

the God of the medieval systematizers--certain, fixed, provable--but is the imageless God of the Biblical imagination whose very imagelessness requires that we fashion His image as we fashion our own as image of God. This is the God Who remains, as we do, forever in the realm of Possibility in a dynamic relation of mutual creativity and ongoing self-realization with and through man, who is His image as He is man's.

The radical use of this Biblical image may not only free man from the competing definitions which deny the very indefinability which renders him human; it may also open the way for the creation of a new theology acceptable to modern man yet capable of reaching beyond the self-limiting secularism which has alienated man from his own human possibilities.

It is our hope that our theology of the Kingdom as creation can put man back in touch with what is truly human in himself. In this way, an age which has for too long been "a dream that is dying" can be refashioned in accordance with a new human self-understanding--a theology of the human forever "coming to birth" as the self-projecting image of that God Who is ever his source and his goal.

2. The Kingdom as Creation in a Technological Age

We have come a long way in this study; but the road to the Kingdom as Creation has been a long one, taking us through ages of myth and history to the border of the "undiscovered country" of the future where we now stand. Whether we have taken the Jewish road or that of general Western civilization, we--all of us--now stand at that border point together and ask the same question: Will that undiscovered country which stretches, mist enshrouded, before us be death, as Shakespeare had it, or a new opening into life? But the question of the future cannot be dealt with until we examine the terrain of the present a bit more closely.

The Technological Image of Man

In the section above we offered a sketch of some features of the present age focusing on politics, science and other contemporary reductionist images of man. It is true that these fragmented and fragmenting views have been competing for the right to define us, the very fragmentation and competition being characteristics of our disjointed time. But at this point we must look beneath these surface manifestations to the deeper conception that underlies this crazy quilt of warring definitions. As has been noted in several quarters, it is technology that provides the dominant and ubiquitous image of man in Western civilization. And as Western technology spreads into hitherto "underdeveloped" areas of the globe, the corresponding image of man accompanies it. Confronted with this new reality, creation theology finds itself joined in battle with two adversaries.

The first of these, discussed above, is the old enemy of the human--the inhuman as a quality of man's action. Man as natural being ever opposes man as creative becoming. The term "human nature" should be written human/nature so as to denote the life and death struggle, the mortal tension of man's existence in which the natural and the human are ever at war. The natural image of man--man simply as what he is--hostile, fearful, so often indifferent to life--is ever with us contesting, although not negating, every victory of the human.

In our age a second front has been opened in the struggle between the human and the inhuman--a new foe has arisen which strikes both from without and from within and which bears striking resemblance to the age-old natural enemy of human possibility. In the nineteenth century man was told by the reigning Darwinian orthodoxy that he was an animal, that his natural being was all that there was--all that he ever could be.[1] As is so often the case with half-truths--the most pernicious and convincing of lies--this one captured the popular mind by associating itself with other, equally misleading half-truths. Was not progress the law of nature, and did not the Social Darwinian view of man's life as a progressive continuum toward the more complex and more efficient do justice to the human as self-projecting possibility? Of course it did not.[2] The iron laws of nature projected

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[1] Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man (New York: AMS Press, 1972), passim.

One commentator correctly summarizes the contents of this volume as follows: "To establish the evolution of man from the lower animals, he (Darwin) had to show that the mental and moral faculties of man differed only in degree and not in kind from those of animals. . .Even language was not unique to man: one species of monkey utters as many as six sounds, which excite in other monkeys similar emotions, while dogs bark in four or five distinct tones. . .He cited a German professor who held that a dog looks upon his master as on a god: Thus, as he earlier reduced language to the grunts and growls of a dog, he now contrived to reduce religion to the lick of a dog's tongue and the wagging of his tail." See Gertrude Himmelfarb, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1968), pp. 370-374.

[2] "Against this iron law of nature, there was no appeal. Certainly there was no appeal to such fictions as equality, justice, or natural rights. As there were no such principles in the jungle, so there were none in society. . .Society had to develop organically out of its own inner compulsions rather than artificially out of the minds of reformers. There were. . .no ideal values in society. All was relative, historical, evolving. The only fixed point of reference was liberty, the freedom to evolve in whatever way nature chose, the freedom of the fit to survive and of the unfit to die." See Himmelfarb, p. 420.

Darwinian man forward, making his future as much of a given as was he himself and eclipsing all trace of that autonomy which is the hallmark of the human. Darwinian man, having understood and (he supposed) begun to master nature, ended by becoming one with it in a spectacular flight from his own freedom.[1]

It may have been the First World War that dealt the coup de grâce to Social Darwinism,[2] or simply the maturation of the technological age, which had been in its infancy in the nineteenth century; but, for whatever cause, talk of natural man gave way in this century to anxious debates over whether machines would take over the world, which, in turn, proved to be the forerunner of the true inheritor of the Darwinian mantle, the image of man as machine--an image now refined and come of age in the form of technological man.[3]

But we are now faced with more than a question of images of man. The technological world we have created and in which we must live seems to have entered into us and taken over where once our humanity held sway.[4] We seem unable to think in any but technological categories of speed, efficiency, bigger, better and more. And if we now hear the cry of "less is more," it only means that we are experimenting with a new technique of efficient usage of resources. Efficiency has become its own justification, as in Darwin's natural selection, aiming at nothing other than its own perpetuation.

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[1] Bultmann, History and Eschatology, p. 8.

[2] Interestingly enough, the Darwinian evolutionary model has been reworked, given a fresh coat of religious optimism and presented as a new theology by writers of a variety of confessions. Evolution via Whitehead issues in, Norman Pittenger, Process Thought and Christian Faith (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968). Evolution by way of Dewey results in, Mordecai Kaplan, The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion (New York: The Reconstructionist Press, 1962).

[3] Jacques Ellul, The Technological Society (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 3-22, 42-64.

[4] Ellul, p. 80.

Technological civilization teems with the active technological beings needed to keep its springs oiled and its axles greased. But is all this action human action? If it were, the usual metaphors used to describe it would not be "rat race" and "ant hill." Like nature, technology, as image, is indifferent to individual life and hostile to the human. The seemingly autonomous expansion and development of its powers threaten to turn man from autonomy into an automaton.[1] And why? Because man appears to want it so. The human is such a burden, such an inefficient way to go about living--the very opposite of the world of convenience promised by more and better technology.

All around us we see the evidence of the technological mentality disguised as humanism but in fact at war with the human. The so-called woman's liberation movement takes as its platform the twin planks of abortion-on-demand and government-funded infant day care centers. If you don't succeed in murdering your baby in its prenatal state, you can at least manage to be bothered with it as little as possible after birth. Liberation? From the human, perhaps--from responsibility, sensitivity and concern for life.[1] The brisk business done on campuses by the purveyors of "speed-reading" courses, "Monarch Notes" and professionally produced term papers attests to the technologizing of our educational system, long a major bastion of the quality of the human against the idols of convenience, efficiency and speed. Religion itself has jumped aboard the technological express to nowhere. Transcendental meditation offers a technology of relaxation so as to perform more efficiently on the job,[2] while Peale and Reverend Ike charge up man's rundown batteries, and the campus fundamentalists package and sell Jesus like a candy-coated aspirin ("good tasting and good for you"), awarding honors for those salesmen most efficient in winning the greatest number of souls.

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[1] Heschel, p. 27.

One could go on and on. The pageant seems as endless as it is pointless. One need not study television commercials ("Buick--Something to Believe In"; "My Quasar Television Made a Believer Out of Me"; "When Everything Else Fails, There is One Name You Can Trust:

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[1] Kenneth Mitzner, "How Will Our Children Answer?" Ideas (1974), vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 12-15.

[2] This use of religion as a technique to improve one's performance of daily tasks is reminiscent of Philo's explanation of Jewish Sabbath observance two millennia ago. It must be remembered, however, that Philo was speaking in terms foreign to Judaism in an apologetic effort to defend his people against Roman accusations of indolence due to their abstention from labor on the seventh day. Today, such thinking has become central to the practice of religion in a technological age.

> "On this day (Sabbath) we are commanded to abstain from all work, not because the law inculcates slackness. . .Its object is rather to give men relaxation from continuous and unending toil and by refreshing their bodies with a regularly calculated system of remissions, to send them out renewed to their old activities." Philo, The Special Laws II (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), Vol. VII, p. 345.

Ivory Snow!") to discern the idolatrous quality of the technological civilization which, created by man, has re-created man in its mindless, soulless image.[1]

What is to be done? What can be done by men, themselves infected by the technological mentality? What must be done is what has always been done by men who know themselves to be carriers of the germs of the inhuman. The body lives as host to billions of deadly micro-organisms to which it has developed immunity. So it may be with the human. The struggle is nothing new, nor is the enemy. Whether in the guise of nature or technology, the inhuman has always sought to crush its human adversary. No final victory or defeat has been achieved or dealt, nor can one be anticipated. The messianic struggle is both for and against the world, both for and against man. Its victories are partial and temporary, and so are its defeats. But with each act of the human in the world, each moment of creation, the Divine Word of redemption is spoken; and the Kingdom of God shines forth undimmed.

The struggle today is more complex, more wide ranging because it must be carried into every corner of every institution of the technopolis so as to redeem the human from its grasp and then to attempt to subdue and humanize the technological reality as man once sought to do with nature--as he ever seeks to do with the inhuman in himself. There will be no easy victories, but the struggle cannot be sidestepped; it has already been joined, and the end is nowhere in sight. Isaiah has warned us to be prepared for the long, exacting struggle which ever attends the coming of the Kingdom.

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[1] Much of the power of the Biblical polemic against idols grew out of the insight that "Like them be those who make them!--Yea, every one who trusts in them!" (Ps. 135:18). We become "like" what we fashion and worship. In this sense, man is always the creator who is in turn created by his creations. But this is not the human creativity we have discussed. The human emerges only when the creator/creation mutual relationship is with God, the imageless image of man. Only in such a relationship is man called to be more, rather than less than he is.

> . . .the Lord will speak to His people,. . .
> yet they would not hear.
> Therefore the word of the Lord will be to them
> precept upon precept, precept upon precept,
> line upon line, line upon line,
> here a little, there a little;
> That they may go, and fall backward,
> and be broken, and snared, and taken.
> (Isa. 28:11-13)

Characteristics of Creation Theology

Before proceeding to a closer examination of the role of creation theology in a technological age, we must make three points, without which our enterprise must fail for lack of sufficient self-understanding.

1) Theology of Human Action

As we have stressed throughout this study, creation theology is active as well as theoretical. As Yeats said, "Those who love the world serve it in action." Any theology which seeks to be relevant to man's situation in a technological society--a society of action--must itself be active--that is, offer a compelling theory of and goad to a particular quality of living. But ultimately it is not theologies but people who act out their lives. We must speak to real people if we are to speak at all, and we offer no apologies for moving from the rarefied atmosphere of speculative thought into the smog-bound environment of the technopolis, keeping in mind the Talmudic warning that "he whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, his wisdom will not endure."[1]

2) Theology of Man-in-his World

It is imperative that as we seek to deal with the fearsome problems of our technological environment we do not delude ourselves that we are entering alien territory.[2] This is no grand crusade of the righteous against unrighteousness, of perfect beings marching forward to battle against a demonic foe. We ourselves are both human and demonic, friend and foe, problem and solution. Our task would be a great deal simpler--and its outcome more promising--if we could hold with Billy Graham that the problem is purely internal and personal, or with Karl Marx that it is merely external and societal. The human must today fight, as we have said, on two fronts against the inhuman both in the individual self and in the collective other. And he who abandons one front to fight exclusively on the other, who adopts an illusory dualism of "moral man and immoral society"[3] or its equally deceptive opposite, will have forfeited the battle in advance.

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[1] Avot 3:12.

[2] From time to time, Ellul falls prey to precisely this delusion in locating the conflict between man and world rather than between the human and inhuman within man and within the world.

"The Christian who is involved in the material history of this world, is involved in it as representing another order, another Master. . . the opposition between this world and the Kingdom of God is a total one." See Jacques Ellul, The Presence of the Kingdom (New York: The Seabury Press, 1967), p. 46.

[3] Although one of his books bears this title, R. Niebuhr never commits the error we are discussing. He points out that men in groups will engage in reprehensible conduct of which they would never be guilty as individuals; but Niebuhr is always careful to stress that men do this, not some abstract entity called "society." See Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), pp. 257-277.

3) Theology of a United Israelite Humanity

If technology has a positive content, it is the oneness of the family of man. Perhaps never before has a single image of man been so widely accepted over so much of the earth's territory. If that image is reductionist and immanentist, at least it is so universally, placing all mankind in the same conceptual boat; and if that boat is a motorboat full of leaks and seemingly incapable of carrying its human cargo very far, it is at least required that we attempt to patch and pilot it together.

This unity of all men under the image of technology makes unavoidable and imperative a unified movement of the human in order to liberate technology from the power of the inhuman. This unity must take concrete form if an all-too-concrete situation is to be dealt with. What this means is that once and for all, Israel--all those who understand their humanity in active terms, who would make of their lives a creative witness to and struggle for the Kingdom present and coming--must join forces in the upbuilding of that universal reality. As we stated in a previous section, the monotheist faith demands no less--whether understood in its Jewish or Christian expressions.

It is no good pointing with pride at the eccumenical or interfaith movements of our day as evidence that this unity of purpose is

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Niebuhr's major points in this regard seem to us to be restatements of Freud's typically brilliant analysis of the irrationality of men in groups. See Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1959).

well on the way toward realization. Those who have taken part in this movement and who understand the radical requirements of our age cannot but be distressed by the vapid generalities, the vague and only half-serious pronouncements which issue from the typical interfaith encounters. There has yet to be heard a single pronouncement of a truly INTRA-faith nature from any one in authority in the Jewish or Christian confessions. By INTRA-faith we mean an attitude which is fully grounded in a truly Israelite self-conception--which takes as its foundational assumption the oneness of the faith of Israel--which recognizes that while Jews and Christians will express themselves through differing symbol systems, these are to be understood as related articulations of a shared Israelite conviction.

To many sensitive ears this may all sound quite simple-minded. During the past decade of inter-faith dialogue it has become fashionable to discourse at length about the profound differences between the Jewish and Christian faiths. By doing so, one appears to be both very deep and very open-minded because, of course, one is ever so eager to exchange views and compare experiences with those of the "other" persuasion without whose fascinatingly "different" beliefs theological dialogue would be such a dull pastime. But how often does this good-natured agreement to disagree act as a cloak for the retention of the old, hardened, exclusivist positions of Christian imperialism and Jewish isolationism?

We are not proposing a return to the simple-minded mouthings of a generation past about Christians being "spiritual Semites" or Judaism being the "spiritual mother of Christianity." All very spiritual, to be sure--and all totally without relevance to the concrete reality. Christians who endlessly repeated the first maxim were quite capable of holding simultaneously that Jews were somehow incomplete Christians; while Jews could intone the second formula again and again without altering their view that Christianity was little more than adulterated Judaism.

Neither are we suggesting that Judaism and Christianity are identical; as symbol systems and articulations of communal faith and experience, each is unique and irreducible to the terms of the other. But so are the languages of two nations. When the Frenchman says "bonjour," he is speaking out of a linguistic and experiential context undeniably distinct from that of the American who responds with "hello." Now, "bonjour" and "hello" can never and should never be blended into a common word of greeting (Esperanto represents an impoverishment of human culture rather than an enrichment of human communication). But would it not be farcical for the Frenchman and the American to dispute over who was using the correct term? If this is so, it is because, despite the different experiences each brings to the meeting--despite the difference in the literal definitions of the greetings--it is obvious that their words have a common meaning and are intended to acknowledge an immediate, shared experience.

Technological civilization is the immediate, shared experience of Israel. Here, Jew and Christian meet in a common present open to a common future. Their respective theological languages, in all their richness, reflect the human experience under vastly different communal conditions of the past. That past has become part of each individual as instantiation of his community; it cannot and should not be thrown off. But the past cannot delay the present reality any more than the present or future can cancel out the past. Today, as a teacher[1] of mine once told me, "Being a Christian is my way of being a Jew, and being a Jew is your way of being a Christian." And we might add that being either is a way of being an Israelite.

Concretely speaking, Christians and Jews, like Frenchmen and Americans, may speak different words, but they are addressing a common situation. It is the universal technological situation which they share that discloses the universal Israelite ground out of which each community has been articulated as two families in the single redemptive congregation of the human--creatures and creators of their God, hearers and speakers of His Word, subjects and builders of His Kingdom.

Creation Theology at Work

In the introduction to this study we quoted the Gospel according to Thomas, that the Kingdom is "a movement and a rest." The dialectic of myth and history as bearers of the Kingdom throughout the Jewish experience has revealed each of these themes--now movement, now rest--as dominant in successive ages. But from the contemporary vantage point we can now see that both movement and rest, taken separately as they have been, can prove fatal to the quality of the human which they were originally intended to renew. Perfect rest stifles man; perpetual movement runs away with him. At our present stage of technological development it is the latter danger which threatens the human/Divine image of man--which has, in fact, already proved fatal to it in its traditional metaphysical form. There can, of course, be no return to the mythic rest of bygone ages. But today the future seems equally removed from us, filled as it is with fantastic new technologies no less inconceivable to contemporary man than is the mythology of the past. Hope in past or distant future are equally unalive; the former is dead, the latter yet to be born.[1]

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[1] Prof. Gabriel Vahanian.

Creation theology aims at uniting movement and rest--a movement in which man labors to construct the Divine/human Kingdom; a rest in the joy and fulfillment of the labor itself. "Future shock" can only be made future promise if we learn from the past that the quest for meaning is itself the human home where alone meaning is to be found--a meaning that we ourselves create. And having learned this, we must seize the present day, the present hour--humanize it--make it ours--render it worthy of its own future.

Today this is a dream; but a dream can be translated into a hope and a hope into a deed--a single creative deed that can bear the whole weight of the Kingdom present and coming. We know that such deeds are not beyond us as individuals, but we cannot stop there.[1] Our deeds must be congregational, communal, societal, if they are to be redemptive (re-creative) of our civilization as a whole. Scripture assures us that:

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[1] See Vahanian, God and Utopia, p. 168. Here, as elsewhere in this work, Vahanian speaks of the presence of God in terms of a self-transcending present rather than a distant future. He is correct in this but incorrect in his footnote to the page in which he speaks of Jews as being "imbued with last ends," as if by understanding messianism in purely futuristic terms (which they did) they were locating the Kingdom solely in the future (which they were not). Torah as Kingdom present was as essential to Judaism as was Messiah as Kingdom to come. If in a post-mythological age we combine the insights of both as moments of redemption (re-creation), the result is Kingdom coming--the messianic as the quality of human action.

> . . .this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear and do it?' Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear and do it?' But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.
> (Deut. 30:11-14)

Today we might say that redemption is not in past or future but in a living present that gives life to both. Redemption--re-creation--is in our hands "that we may do it." Paradoxically, it is the technological image of man, up to this point the enemy of the human,[2] that can be the vehicle for the re-humanizing of man's situation.

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[1] Brunner disagrees, p. 71.

> "But it is one of the most harmful aberrations of our time that it gives far too high an importance to public life, and has forgotten that the truly human is not to be found in public, but in the private and intimate sphere of human life."

With all due respect to Brunner, this is a view that man can no longer afford to entertain.

[2] On this issue we take a stand somewhere between Vahanian and Ellul. The former holds that "technology is also neutral. . . it is not by definition hostile to man" (God and Utopia, p. 178). While the latter believes that technology as "the irremediable triumph of means takes away all liberty from man. . ." (The Presence of the Kingdom, p. 77). Our point is that while Vahanian might be correct that in itself technology is not inhuman, Ellul is also correct that technological man is less than free. It seems to us

Man as human is man the creature/creator of his own possibilities in the Possibility which is God. Man's initial Fall was his surrender to and internalization of nature--his conquest by that which he had sought to conquer. Biblical myth can be seen as a desperate attempt to break the chains of nature with which man had been bound by appealing to the One Who holds nature in His hand and thus renders it creation. But myth in turn lost its liberating power and became a straightjacket restricting human becoming. Hungry for freedom, man turned to history as a method of propelling himself forward despite nature and beyond myth. History did at first provide a liberating image of man; but it, too, in its turn became a prison, albeit a mobile one, rather than a home for man. Once again man cried out for freedom, this time from the inevitabilities of historical process, as he had once sought liberation from natural law and mythic constraints. Technology proved to be the liberating force man longed for. And

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that it is not technology itself but technology as image of man that seeks to displace the human. The danger is greater than Vahanian seems to think but not so great as Ellul believes. The latter's position on the total effacement of all human freedom in a technological society is reminiscent of the Calvinist doctrine of the Fall resulting in the total depravity of man (enslavement of man to sin, a form of un-freedom). Ellul writes:

> "We are caught in a trap. It is no use pretending to be 'deep' and to talk loftily about the possession of inward liberty. If liberty cannot be expressed in my life, it is an illusion" (p. 77).

To this Brunner might reply as he did to Calvin (via Barth) that "all this does not mean that nothing is left of divine creation in man's nature" (p. 65). We must agree with Brunner in this. Neither the "Fall" into nature nor into history totally effaced the human. Why should the "Fall" into technology do so? And if it has--if the battle is already lost--how could Ellul manage to write his works of religious humanism--and even if he could, why would he bother?

there can be no doubt that it has freed him from the previously iron laws of historical cause and effect.

This is most readily apparent in the field of military technology which has rendered large-scale warfare obsolete. The historical inevitability attending the inexorable emergence of super powers had decreed that the scale of human conflict should grow apace. But the atomic bombs which exploded over Japan have imploded into the history of nations, uniting them in a desire to survive and consequently to reject major war as a means of furthering politico-economic policy. National interests have been compelled to redefine themselves in terms of overriding human interest; technology has swallowed up history.[1]

But, as we have seen, technology is not always the vehicle of the human. Typically it is not. In the one case of military technology, it was fortuitous that the weapons fashioned to perfect techniques of destruction proved so perfect that they became instruments for developing techniques of peace. Here we see a happy result of the autonomous inner dynamic of technology. Elsewhere the results have been less beneficial. Once again, having conquered the previous images of man, the succeeding image goes on to conquer the human. Technology has laid nature and history low but in so doing has re-enslaved man. And again man must be liberated by a new image which can break the shackles of the old:

> Out of my distress I called on the Lord;
> The Lord answered me and set me free.
> (Ps. 118:5)

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[1] As former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger used to point out, it is this technological situation which has created the ground for a shared Soviet-American self-interest and is the compelling reason for the present detente, limited though its scope may yet be.

We said that technology itself offers us the vehicle for transcending its own limitations. Time and again in past ages the human has "called on the Lord," has liberated itself from one image after another only to surrender to a new one and then to free itself once again. Have we not gone through this cycle a sufficient number of times to have learned that the cycle itself is man's life pattern in which victories of the human and surrenders to the inhuman are the dominant features?[1] But the pattern is not only cyclical. In linear fashion, nature gives way to myth which surrenders to history which is ended by technology. However, the power by which each has, in its turn, been broken is the power of creation by which the human has redeemed itself from the abyss, once having rediscovered itself as the image of God. This power moves in neither cyclical nor linear patterns. It is an irruptive/eruptive force which, as Divine, breaks into and as human, breaks out of man's fixed self-conceptions.[2]

The human/Divine creative power to make new must be activated today to break up the technological image of man and, in so doing, break open the human future. Our unexpected ally in this struggle will be technology itself. Paradoxically, technology, like theology, focuses on man's unity, man's action and man's future. If under the inhuman image of technology that unity has been mechanical, that action heteronomous and that future a threatened shock; this need not be the case. An alternative image of man may be about to irrupt into and erupt out of man's seemingly stalled condition: the Divine/human image under which unity is understood as congregation, action as Torah and future as Messiah. As moments of creative becoming, these are to be conceived not as separate categories but as interwoven threads or interpenetrating themes which make up the whole life of the human. For action must be congregational and messianic while Torah is the messianic path to the oneness of all Israel--the congregation of the human.

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[1] "There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business"
(Eliot, p. 128).

[2] ". . .I now realize that God is an irruptive presence in my world, a world where the question of God no longer exists." See Jacques Durandeaux, Living Questions to Dead Gods (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), p. 40. True, but this irruption of the Divine is accompanied by an eruption of the human which is the "realization" of which Durandeaux speaks.

Creation is not technology, but its human alternative--human because creation affirms man as creator as well as created. Technology has robbed man of his autonomy,[1] suppressing human possibilities and substituting its own mechanical potentialities. Again, this need not be so. Creation and technology as images of man may be opposites, but man as creator and man as technologist need not be. Technological man may give way to a human technology as man rediscovers his imageless image as far beyond the limits of technology as it was of nature or history. But technology itself may offer man the means for this rediscovery. Technology, after all, has more in common with creation than did nature, myth or history. It is, in fact, creation dehumanized,[2] cut loose from its proper human master and now seemingly beyond his control. The re-establishment of that human control is the crucial question of our time.

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[1] In this one respect it resembles myth. Vahanian disagrees in regard to myth, considering it, unlike technology, to be anthropocentric. See God and Utopia, p. 159.

[2] As such, technology is to creation what historicism is to history and mythology is to myth.

That control must be exerted communally and socially. In Jewish liturgy sin is acknowledged and repentance is granted collectively and publicly.[1] So it must be today. As a civilization, we have allowed the inhuman spirit to take possession of, and propel forward, what was once technical progress but has become technological process. It is, therefore, as a civilization, that we must repossess what is rightfully ours and make of it once again an extension of the human and humanizing activity of creation. Is this possible? Can the world be changed? Can man be changed? But the initial requirement is not that man or the world be changed. First their visions of themselves--their images--need to be altered. Process can become progress once again when it is given human eyes and human hands to guide it. Technology will once more become creative technique[2] when man comes to understand the communal dimension of his humanity. Today he sees all around him a society which is the collective expression of his inhumanity. Why should the human remain restricted to the private sphere of life? Man has developed systems of communication which have drawn the private and public spheres closer than ever before. Must this mean that technology will dehumanize private life; or can new techniques be developed to humanize communal existence?

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[1] Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: A Prayer Book For the Days of Awe (New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 1972), passim.

[2] Vahanian is, we believe, the first to have distinguished meaningfully between technology and technique. See God and Utopia, passim.

As in the past struggles against natural and historical process as bearers of the collective inhuman, so today there can be no final victory.[1] The battles will be continuous, the struggle ongoing to reshape the seemingly immutable images of the anonymous, inhuman institutions of the technopolis. But he who did not fully succumb to the nineteenth century's natural, biological view of man need not accept the twentieth century's natural, technological view of institutions. The multi-national corporation, the international bank, the giant conglomerate, need not define us as a collectivity any more than do our veins or our arteries define us as individuals. The body, whether social or physical, needs its circulatory systems. They are the givens of nature and technology. They are ours, but they are not us.

The Jewish experience of dealing with the hostile institutional structures of medieval Europe can be helpful here. Hemmed in on every side by a society intent upon defining him as it pleased, the Jew paid no heed. He knew who and what he was--a child of the Most High--and nothing could add to or subtract from that. He dealt with the inhuman every day, but it never overwhelmed him.

> "They surrounded me, surrounded me on every side;
> in the name of the Lord I cut them off!"
> (Ps. 118:11)

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[1] ". . .thefalse claim of finality is always partly the ignorance of our ignorance. It is a failure in our capacity for self-transcendence. But since this capacity belongs to man's native endowment, the sinful claim of finality is always partly a conscious or semi-conscious effort to obscure the partial and interested character of our knowledge of the truth." See Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 215.

The Jew fought on simply by continuing to affirm his own identity; and in the end, in his seeming powerlessness, he outlived the power of all the institutions that sought to crush him.

Like that of the medieval Jew, our human identity is today at stake. But our position is at once more dangerous and more advantageous than his. The technological definition has invaded and reformed our self-image; but because of this, what remains of the human can contest this new manifestation of the inhuman on its own home ground. And, having joined that battle, the human need not write off or "cut off" the institutional structures of society as the medieval Jew was forced to do. The human knows that the inhuman within and without is the same enemy, to be fought with the same weapons. However, there is no use pretending that the institutional battle will not be more difficult and complex than the individual struggle. Speaking in terms of technological efficiency, the individual man is at his worst when he is guided by the indifference to life which characterizes the inhuman in him. At such moments, the human rebels in the form of conscience or sympathy[1] and causes internal conflict often sufficient to immobilize the organism. But institutions are not men. They are at their most efficient when indifferent to individual life; and of course, they have no conscience. But then the same was true of nature and history.

In each case man must provide what the external situation lacks. In the case of the institutions of the technopolis, it is the congregation of the human that is called to challenge efficiency, convenience and speed--not because, as is the case today, we wish to preserve dwindling resources for the future; but because efficiency, convenience and speed are purely quantitative considerations, masquerading as creativity, but ultimately subversive of the quality of the human, present and future.

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[1] We believe that Hume was correct in regarding "sympathy" as the inborn capacity that is definitive of the human.

> "It is impossible for such a creature as man to be totally indifferent to the well or ill-being of his fellow creatures . . ." See David Hume, An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1957), p. 56.

Creation theology must fight the inhuman even while laboring to build that human Kingdom of God which is the communal expression of the Divine image of man.

> And each of the builders had his sword girded at
> his side while he built.
> (Neh. 4:18)

The characteristics of the Kingdom the human labors to build are not unknown to him; Torah which calls upon man to act gives him a code of action by which to distinguish the human from the inhuman, the creative from the destructive. There is no radical theological terminology for justice, mercy, love--sensitivity to life in all its forms, in all its expressions. The traditional words will have to do. They convey, as they have always conveyed, the most human of human possibilities--the most exalted of Divine attributes. All action reflective of these principles is messianic action, creative action. It will take many forms--ethical, aesthetic, sociopolitical, intellectual; it will at times appear to oppose and at other times to uphold existing conditions, depending on the qualities--human or inhuman--that they exhibit. But whatever forms it may assume--familiar or as yet undreamed of, now or in the future--Israelite theology of creative human action will be found at its redemptive work--building a home fit for man, a Kingdom worthy of God.

> The day is short; the work is great; the workmen are sluggish; the reward is much; and the Master of the house is urgent.
>
> (Avot 1:20)

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